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skin diver

WORLD'S BEST SCUBA MAGAZINE

MARCH 1996

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7 GREAT
WRECK DIVES
IN THE CARIBBEAN

ALL 1996 DIVE GUIDE FLORIDA

LIVE-ABOARD REPORTS:

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Nekton Diving Cruises

TROPICAL HOT SPOTS:

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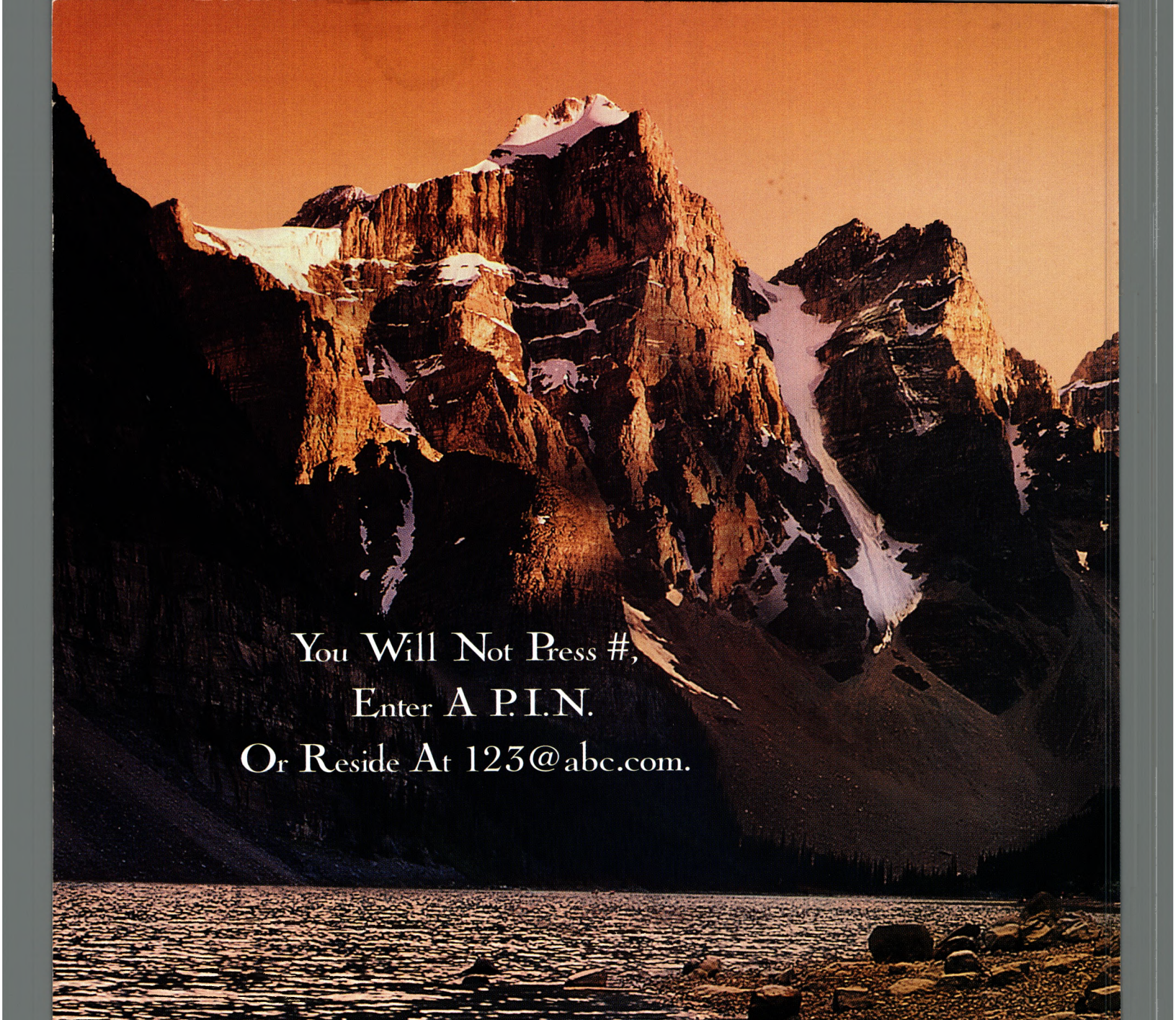
- Sea & Sea YS-120 Strobe
- Harvey's Titanium Drysuit
- Sea Quest Quickdraw BC

SHARKS

YOU SHOULD KNOW
THE SILKY SHARK

I LEARNED... Unprepared,
Faulty Rental Gear, Darkness & No
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skin diver

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They're here at last!



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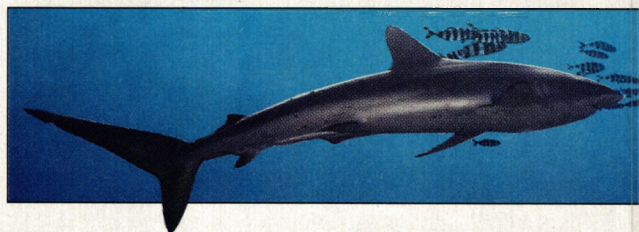


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ABOUT THE COVER: Stuart Cove of Dive South Ocean, Nassau, New Providence prepares for his shark feeding dive in The Bahamas wearing an Uwatec/Dräger Atlantis 1 recreational rebreather. To read more about Dive South Ocean, see page 102; recreational rebreathers are discussed on page 16. Photo/Geri Murphy.

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Responsible Diver(s) of the Year

BY BILL GLEASON



In the 1995 movie *Seven*, a maniacal killer taunts two detectives as he executes a methodical series of unspeakable crimes themed around the Seven Deadly Sins (sloth, lust, anger, greed, gluttony, pride and envy). The stunning and macabre conclusion of the film deals with the sins of envy and anger—movie goers are unlikely to forget this particular scene well into the next millennium! It would be a nicer world if the Seven Deadly Sins were solely the province of Hollywood but the daily paper and nightly news regularly tell us it's just not so!

As pervasive as crime appears in the news, it's a very remote possibility for the majority of citizens, as it should be. Most divers are just out there living their lives adhering to a personal code of ethics that regularly sets high standards of responsibility. This code of ethics is the real superhero in our day to day efforts to stymie the dark forces. Our diving business has its own versions of the Seven Deadly Sins and, while none is as dramatic as those mentioned above, there's a constant struggle to maintain safety, provide good service to diving customers and march to the music of responsible diving.

In 1992, SKIN DIVER issued its first Responsible Diver of the Year Award; an honorarium worth \$15,000. The idea behind the award is simple. Seek and reward those individuals in the diving world whose activities best embody the professional code of ethics we call responsible diving. This code is not inscribed on any stone tablets but all divers recognize responsible diving when they see it. And, I'm pleased to report, most divers join in the ongoing effort. You see bits and pieces of responsible diving each month in this magazine in the form of slogans at the bottom of columns, gently reminding divers to recognize and maintain high standards of responsibility underwater. These phrases are part of an ongoing Responsible Diving Campaign and were created by submissions from readers. Their

thoughts on the subject also spurred the creation of the Responsible Diver of the Year Award.

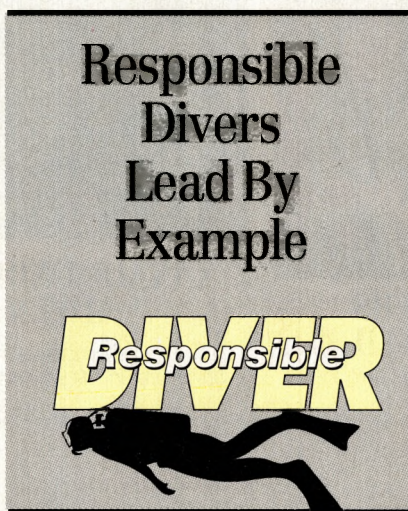
Peter Hughes, of Peter Hughes Diving, was the first Responsible Diver of the Year. But, the award wasn't for any of the firsts he accomplished in the diving business world. It was, instead, for developing a new type of decompression stop bar for his boats; a safety bar

That's responsible diving as well. Education is one of the key tenets of this particular diving style!

Last year, two of diving's West Coast pioneers became the Responsible Divers of the Year. While whole stories could be written about Bob and Bill Meistrell (of Redondo Beach, California's Dive 'n Surf and Body Glove fame), it was none of their professional achievements that earned them the award. It was given to them because, after decades of diving Catalina Island, they are working hard to restore and preserve the island's underwater world. Working hand in hand with the Catalina Island Conservancy, they have pioneered many ecologically sound projects. Last year it was helping to re-introduce abalone by "planting" them on the reefs of Catalina. A strong environmental theme is also part of the Responsible Divers Code.

This year, our search for a Responsible Diver of the Year turned toward Ski Country—Denver, Colorado. It turns out diving is also popular in the Denver area and there's no shortage of dive stores. The history of their relations, however, reads like a selection from the first paragraph, highlighting envy, greed, pride and anger. Their situation was no different than that of small retailers in any highly competitive business in the United States. The interesting thing about the Denver retailers is they decided to work together for the common good of diving! They felt this might be the best long range tactic and it turns out to be true. For their demonstrated spirit of cooperation, SKIN DIVER is proud to announce the Colorado Scuba Retailers Association as the recipients of this year's Responsible Diver Award. Cooperation and the willingness to put aside historical differences may be one of the strongest tenets of responsible diving.

Our congratulations to current and past recipients. We know full well that you are continuing to make contributions to this important part of our diving world. And, to those thousands of divers out there whose personal diving codes include a strong dose of responsible diving, our heartfelt thanks! 🐠



that remains stationary in 15 feet of water. While this in itself was laudable, it alone didn't earn him the award—that was given for his decision not to patent or protect the device in any way. In fact, he offered the blueprints and design to competitors and anyone else who wanted them and invited them to copy or modify his design. This was all done in the interests of general diving safety. Now that's responsible diving!

A flatlander earned the Responsible Diver of the Year Award in 1993. Hailing from the diving Mecca of Indianapolis, Gale Livers of Ikelite, a well known photographer and diver, had turned his attention to education. Working with Ikelite and the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Gale designed an interactive computer education game that allowed kids to "surf" the diving world electronically and learn about reefs, fish and the like. It was all done on his own time and with his own money. Knowing he wouldn't make a dime didn't stop him.

You may only get One Chance

make sure you have the right tools!

Ikelite has the right tools to make your underwater photographic experience fun and rewarding.



AQUASHOT II

The Aquashot II is so simple and inexpensive you won't believe the beautiful results it can produce. Simply load the Aquashot II with a 35mm Kodak or Fuji single-use camera and all you have to do is point and shoot. Oh yes, you do have to turn on the flash and advance the film, but that is as technical as it gets.

NIKONOS N5 TRAY

Ikelite's New N5 Tray was designed exclusively for the Nikonos V. The compact design makes the N5 Tray an integral part of the camera with two strobe mounting points located underneath to reduce width. The N5 Tray incorporates a Velcro strap and rubber handle for comfort and security.

RAPID ADVANCE LEVER

Ikelite's Rapid Advance installs over the Nikonos V folding film advance lever, making film advancement fast and easy.

TTL SLAVE

Ikelite's TTL Slave Sensor turns any Ikelite Substrobe into a true TTL slave, operates up to 50 feet from the primary strobe, plus eliminates the need for a second cumbersome sync cord.



QUICK GRIP ARMS

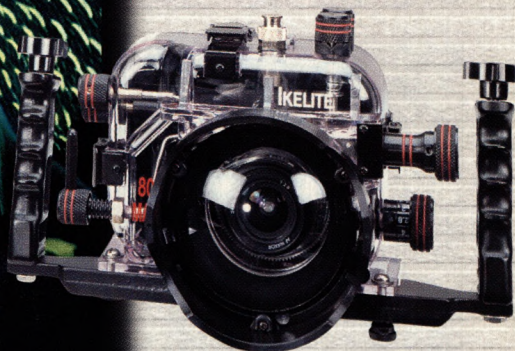
Ikelite's Quick Grip Arms offer all the features of a ball-socket arm system, plus the added advantage of a quick release handle. Removable at the push of a button, the contoured rubber grip offers easy one hand control of the strobe.

SUBSTROBES

Designed and built in the USA for both the professional and amateur photographer, Ikelite offers 6 models of underwater strobes to meet different needs and budgets. The Substrobe 50 is the brightest and fastest recycling strobe in its class. The Ai offers variable output and angle of coverage. The 150 and 300 are the choice of pros the world over. All Ikelite Substrobes are covered by a two year limited warranty supported by a proven commitment to service unmatched in the industry worldwide.

SLR-AF HOUSINGS

Choose the housing that affords full underwater use of your favorite 35mm camera, be it Nikon, Canon, Minolta or Pentax. There is not another housing at any price that will produce better photographic results or provide greater security underwater than an Ikelite SLR housing.



VIDEO HOUSINGS

Ikelite offers a full range of video housings for Sony and JVC. Most housings include dome port, wide angle lens, video-eye magnifier, top-handle, and quick-release base. Clear housings offer visual inspection of sealing surfaces and complete monitoring of camera and all functions. Add Ikelite's Pro Video-Lite II to capture the stunning colors of the marine world.

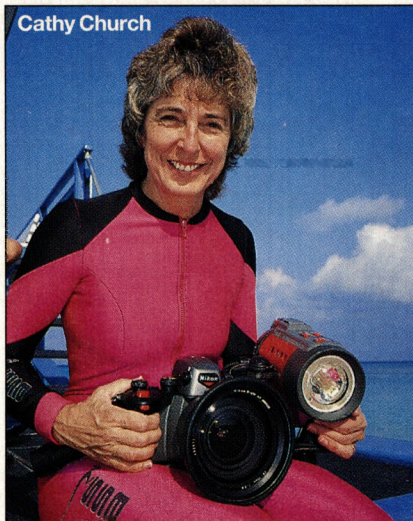


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For additional information contact your local Dive Shop.

circle #93 on Reader Service Card

Cathy Church



Discover The Cathy Church Super Course

Learn More, Learn Faster, Get Great Pictures While Having Fun!

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY



If you want to take great pictures and have more fun with underwater photography than you ever thought possible, enroll in this summer's Cathy Church Super Course. The entertainment value alone is worth the price of admission! Cathy keeps the students laughing while she makes f/stops and shutter speeds come alive. The program is an interactive workshop where everyone participates and the students go home with wonderful pictures. This is why Cathy's programs are always sold out and graduates rave about her techniques.

Many attributes distinguish Cathy Church from other underwater photo instructors:

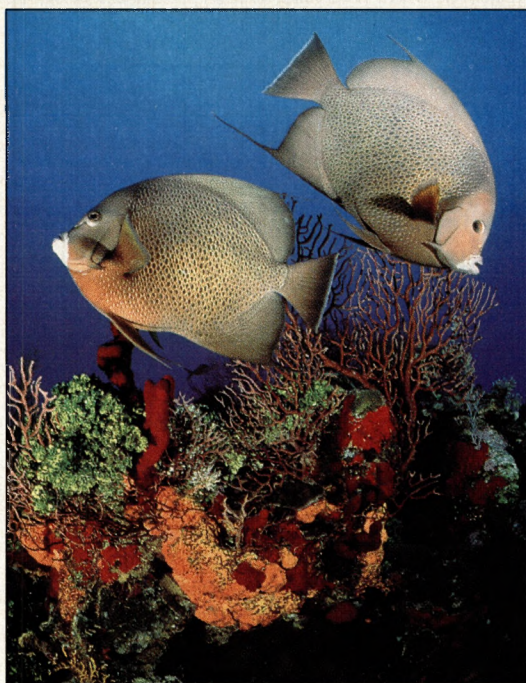
1. She has California teaching credentials and the experience to go with them.
2. She has a degree in marine biology and is thoroughly familiar with the animals she photographs.
3. She is one of the world's most eminent underwater photographers, with the hottest selling photography.
4. An early pioneer in underwater photography, she has co-authored four books, more than 230 articles and has a popular instructional video on underwater photography.
5. She has one of the best undersea photo studios (a coral reef) at her doorstep, where students practice what they learn.
6. She has developed a unique, full immersion program, where students learn faster and learn more than in any other program available.

FULL SERVICE PHOTO CENTER

Cathy's classroom is unlike any school you have ever attended. The Sunset Underwater Photo Centre and Gallery is at Sunset House, Grand Cayman's

Left: "Devil's Grotto," from the Cathy Church Collection, is this famous underwater photographer's signature print.

photo/Cathy Church



photo/Cathy Church



photo/Herb Rafael

Cathy helps students set up photos of two angelfish (left) and an angelfish face (above). Below: Cathy and Herb Rafael with photographs for sale from the Cathy Church Collection.



longest established and most successful dedicated dive resort. This resort was designed especially for divers and has complete facilities for both shore diving (which is excellent) and boat diving.

The Photo Centre is the largest underwater photo facility in the world. In the lower level of the Sunset House main building, it is an underwater photographer's dream come true. As you descend the stairway and open the door, your eyes are greeted by a dazzling array of underwater camera equipment, photo accessories, photo books and underwater photo enlargements. It is a veritable candy store for underwater photo buffs.

At the Photo Centre Cathy Church and her husband Herb Rafael offer myriad services and educational programs. You can enjoy an afternoon class and qualify for the PADI Photo Specialty or get an easy mini lesson when you rent

Nikonos V, Sea & Sea Motor Marine II or an underwater video camera system. The Photo Centre has the largest inventory of Nikonos equipment in the world at low prices.

On Grand Cayman, a camera flooding doesn't necessarily mean you will be leaving the island without pictures. The Photo Centre offers fast, reliable Nikonos camera repairs on a daily basis. It maintains a complete stock of Nikonos V parts and has the facilities for thoroughly testing every repaired camera. Cathy and Herb also maintain an inventory of hard to get underwater light meters, extension tubes, strobe arms, film, batteries and other supplies.

The Photo Centre processes E-6 slide film every day, twice a day if you need faster service. Using advanced chemical monitoring techniques, Cathy produces professional quality film processing.

The attitude of the Photo Centre staff members is refreshing. They present the material just as Cathy would—even the jokes are the same! When asked about the fake foot protruding from under the photo cabinet, Cathy will tell you it's just there to keep a smile on your face.

At the Photo Centre, Cathy wants every visitor to have the best time possible. If you miss a dive and can't use the camera you rented, you don't have to pay for it. Cathy's attitude is that it's bad enough you couldn't dive, you shouldn't lose money on an unused rental, too.

CATHY CHURCH COLLECTION

When it comes to underwater photography, Cathy Church is exceptionally well versed. Every wall of the Photo Centre is covered with underwater photos. These spectacular images are indeed an inspiration to any budding photographer.

Her gallery offers more than 50 different underwater images—most of them available in six different sizes and up to four different frames, with a choice of dozens of different colored mats. This incredible collection draws shoppers from all over Grand Cayman—even nondivers. Most of them buy the pictures right on the spot; for customer convenience Cathy can have them shipped to any address in the U.S. or Canada at no extra charge.

All of the photo enlargements are printed on Fuji Super High Gloss printing material, double matted, mounted, framed and hand signed. Unlike normal color prints, these pictures will last a lifetime, with virtually no fading. The photo enlargements are produced in sizes ranging from 11 by 14 inches to a giant 30 by 40 inch super print. These breathtaking pictures are offered at amazingly affordable prices. Cathy and Herb have also produced a color brochure illustrating the Cathy Church Collection. You can obtain a copy by calling (800) 934-3661.

For seven weeks this summer, the gallery will be moved out and the Super Course moved in. Counter space that held stacks of prints will become individual work areas for 16 enthusiastic underwater photographers.

SUPER COURSES

There are three elements to these great courses—structured learning, superb service and lots of good humor. The courses start on arrival day; cameras are checked out and the basic talk starts with: "This is the front of the camera and this...." Topics quickly advance to the basics of composition and the subtleties of previsualizing a scene to get the best possible photograph. Throughout the week Cathy uses lectures, critiques and lots of individual help above and below

(Continued on Page 50)

Sea & Sea YS-120 Duo

A Compact, Versatile Strobe with Plenty of Power

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Over the last few years the underwater photography line offered by Sea & Sea has exploded into a vast system of housings, flashes, cameras and related underwater photo accessories. The Sea & Sea strobe systems have become more powerful yet smaller and, in the case of the YS-120 Duo, more flexible. This amazing strobe works with such Sea & Sea products as the Motor Marine II-EX and SX-1000 as well as the Nikonos V and RS and a housed Nikon N50. This is possible because of a unique type of electronic circuitry that adapts for TTL photography with either four or five pin connectors. The YS-120 is the first and only submersible strobe with this circuitry.

Considered a mid-sized underwater strobe, the YS-120 Duo has a color temperature of 5000°K, which will give your photos natural flesh tones and warm hues. At full power, the underwater guide number is 45 with ISO 100 film. This translates to an exposure of f/11 at three feet. Just as important is the 105 degree beam angle, which covers most wide angle lenses on the market. If you want to soften the flash and spread the beam angle even more, you can use the diffuser that comes with the flash. A small ring on the flash housing allows you to attach a cord from the diffuser to the flash so it

The YS-120 Duo can be used on manual or TTL and with several cameras. It covers the picture area of most wide angle lenses and can also function as a slave.

cannot be lost underwater.

There are two controls on the back of the strobe that allow easy access to all its functions. The left switch gives the unit power, allows you to select slave function or test fire the strobe. The right switch has positions for full power manual, one-half power manual and TTL automatic.

Unlike any strobe on the market today, the YS-120 Duo features identical indicator lights on each side of the strobe head. No matter which side of the camera the

strobe is mounted on, the indicator lights are visible. This practical innovation is sure to be a hit with dual strobe photographers. A red light signals the flash is fully powered and ready to perform. A second light turns green and beeps when a correct exposure is achieved using TTL. This green light stays on long enough for you to move your eyes from the camera viewfinder to the strobe to check the exposure.

Because the internal flash circuitry for Canon cameras is very different from Nikon's, there is a second version of this strobe, the YS-120-C TTL, designed just for use with housed Canon cameras.

The YS-120 Duo is powered by eight AA batteries and recycles at full power in two to three seconds with nickel-cadmiums, three to four seconds with alkaline. (Continued on Page 59)



Top: The back of the YS-120 showing the battery compartment door and switches. Above: The YS-120 Duo can use alkaline, lithium or rechargeable batteries.

COMPARISON OF SEA & SEA STROBES

Model	U/W Guide # (ISO 100)	Picture Angle	Color Temp.	Recycle Time (seconds)	Weight In Air	Retail Price
YS-300TTL	49	100°	5500°K	4 (A)	4.4 lbs.	\$999.95
YS-120 DUO	45	105°	5000°K	4 (A) 3 (Ni) 4 (L)	2.9 lbs.	\$782.95
YS-50TTL	40	90°	5400°K	5.5-6.5 (A) 4-5 (Ni)	1.6 lbs.	\$426.95
YS-20S	23	85°	5400°K	6 (A)	12.6 oz.	\$316.95

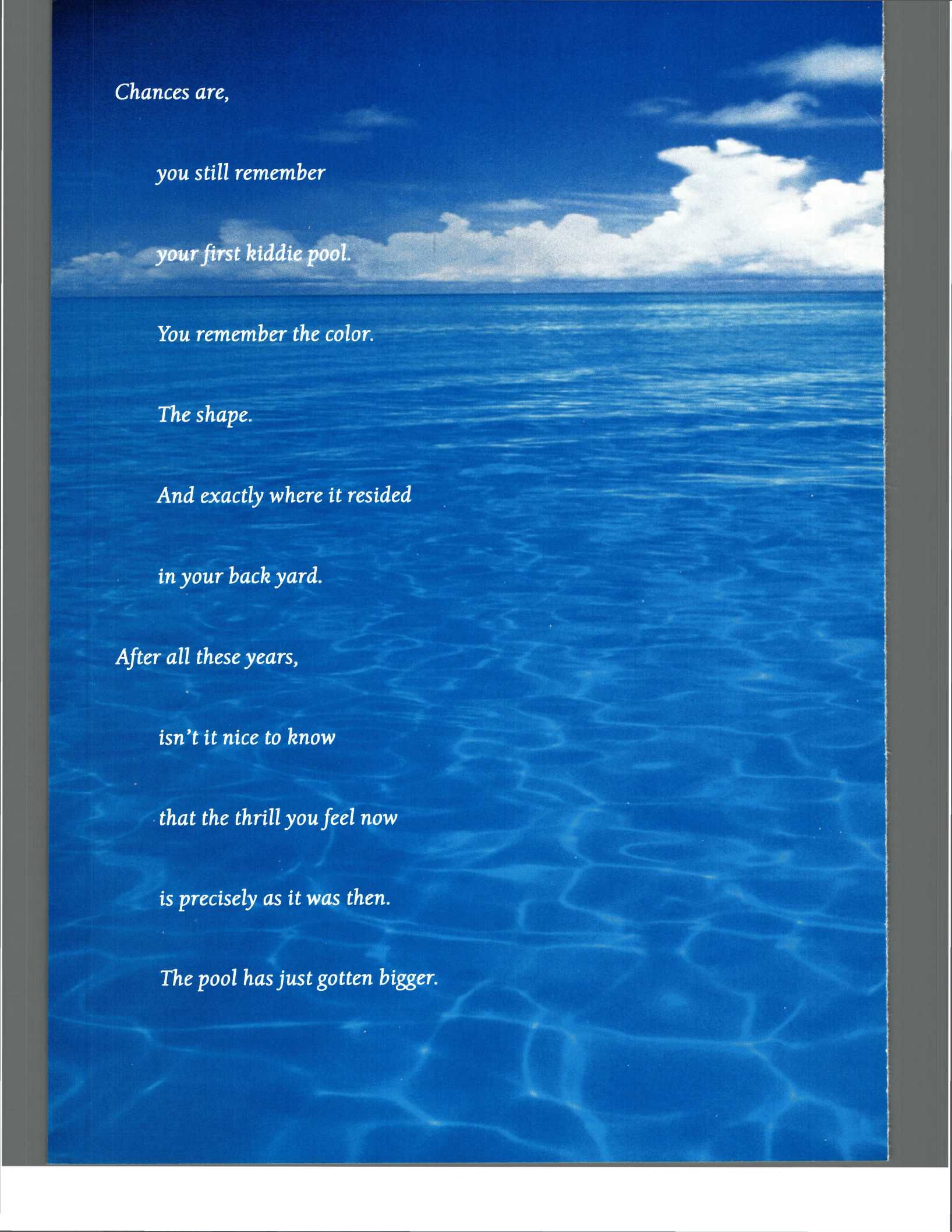
A = alkalines, N = nickel-cadmiums, L = lithium



*Don't Forget
Your Rubber Ducky.*



SCUBAPRO
Deep Down, You Want The Best.



Chances are,

you still remember

your first kiddie pool.

You remember the color.

The shape.

And exactly where it resided

in your back yard.

After all these years,

isn't it nice to know

that the thrill you feel now

is precisely as it was then.

The pool has just gotten bigger.



A.I.R. 2

Safe, efficient diving requires a buoyancy compensator power inflator and a back-up second stage regulator. The A.I.R. 2 completes the BC/regulator system by coupling BC power inflation with a super-reliable regulator.

All buoyancy compensators (BCs) must successfully move a diver vertically. SCUBAPRO buoyancy compensators are considered to be the world's finest.

Whatever you're looking for in a BC, whether it be a Stabilizing Jacket, front adjustable jacket, or back flotation unit, SCUBAPRO offers a style to fit your diving skills and needs. Each designed to make diving easier, more comfortable, and more fun.

SeaHawk

For those who prefer back flotation, we introduce the new SeaHawk. It features a weight-integrated modular buoyancy system that offers precise flotation control, both underwater and at the surface. The shoulder harness, based on a backpacker's pack, is ergonomically contoured to allow complete freedom of movement and tank stability. The result is a balance never before achieved in a back flotation unit.



The Classic Stabilizing Jacket

Divers want to be able to go anywhere their interest and skills might take them. So SCUBAPRO created and perfected Advanced Buoyancy Control (A.B.C.). This design employs interconnecting air chambers that completely envelop the diver, allowing unrestricted movement in three dimensions.

The Superior Construction of SCUBAPRO BCs

SCUBAPRO's buoyancy compensators are made of the finest materials. The top-of-the-line Classic model features the handmade Finseal seam — the most airtight and durable construction method in diving. Other SCUBAPRO stabilizing jackets employ our exclusive Heat Seal process, the best automated seam construction in the industry.

Whether it's Stabilizing Jackets, front adjustable jackets or back flotation units,

Classic

SCUBAPRO's best Stabilizing Jacket, the Classic (shown here equipped with A.I.R. 2 power inflator and back-up regulator) is constructed of rugged 420 denier nylon and uses SCUBAPRO's exclusive Finseal seam technology.

Deep Down, You Want Advanced Buoyancy Control.

A.B.C. allows a diver to move vertically, but also to roll 360 degrees, move diagonally or remain stationary and comfortable in any variation of head-up or head-down positions.

Back Flotation Units

Many technical divers and underwater photographers prefer back flotation units for their uncluttered chest area and exceptional support for surface swimming. SCUBAPRO's new SeaHawk offers an integrated weight system with optional back-mounted counterweights, providing perfect balance both on the surface and underwater. SCUBAPRO's exclusive shoulder harness design allows complete freedom of movement and total tank stability.



SCUBAPRO BCs are the products of choice for everyone from the recreational

diver to performance-oriented sport divers to professional dive experts around the world.

SCUBAPRO is the Solution

Remember, the best masks, fins, snorkels, regulators, computers, BCs, wetsuits and outerwear are made by SCUBAPRO.

Call 1-800-GO-SCUBA (1-800-467-2822) for more information and the name of the SCUBAPRO dive center near you. In Canada, 905-634-0023. Internet: <http://www.jwa.com>

SCUBAPRO
Deep Down, You Want The Best.

Equipment Matching

BY DENNIS K. GRAVER

Match the following equipment terms and partial definitions.
The average diver should be able to match most of the terms
but a few will challenge even advanced divers.

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------|---|
| 1. Manifold | _____ | A. Converts energy from one form to another |
| 2. Stage | _____ | B. Has hands that point to numbers |
| 3. DIN | _____ | C. Pressure does not affect valve operating force |
| 4. Downstream valve | _____ | D. Rotating reference ring |
| 5. Burst disk | _____ | E. Curved, metal tube for pressure detection |
| 6. Y valve | _____ | F. Thin, metal disk found in all valves |
| 7. K valve | _____ | G. Air compression indicates depth |
| 8. J valve | _____ | H. Opens in the direction of gas flow |
| 9. Valve snorkel | _____ | I. A manually operated exhaust valve |
| 10. Safety plug | _____ | J. Fixed reference line on a compass |
| 11. Balanced valve | _____ | K. Multiple cylinder connecting pipe |
| 12. Upstream valve | _____ | L. Extra second stage |
| 13. Pilot valve | _____ | M. A tube or pipe opening or aperture |
| 14. Manometer | _____ | N. Uses air pressure versus mechanical leverage |
| 15. Capillary gauge | _____ | O. Pressure reduction step in a regulator |
| 16. Bourdon tube gauge | _____ | P. Measures cylinder pressure underwater |
| 17. Analog gauge | _____ | Q. Dual regulator valve for a single cylinder |
| 18. Diaphragm | _____ | R. Extends from bottom of cylinder valve |
| 19. Lubber line | _____ | S. Type of high pressure valve |
| 20. Bezel | _____ | T. Rubber plug found in high pressure gauges |
| 21. Dump valve | _____ | U. Operates against the direction of gas flow |
| 22. O-ring | _____ | V. Circular sealing ring |
| 23. Bias spring | _____ | W. Established regulator intermediate pressure |
| 24. Transducer | _____ | X. Common exhaust valve |
| 25. Purge | _____ | Y. Cuts power when released |
| 26. DPV | _____ | Z. Recirculates exhaled breathing gases |
| 27. Dead man switch | _____ | AA. British term for buoyancy compensator |
| 28. Rebreather | _____ | BB. Indicates maximum depth attained |
| 29. Orifice | _____ | CC. Ankle straps that prevent fin loss |
| 30. SPG | _____ | DD. Simple regulator testing device |
| 31. Octopus | _____ | EE. Propulsion vehicle for divers |
| 32. ABLJ | _____ | FF. Warm water wetsuit |
| 33. MDI | _____ | GG. Simple on/off valve |
| 34. Fixe-palmes | _____ | HH. Found in some regulators and depth gauges |
| 35. Shortie | _____ | II. Lever operated reserve valve |

Answers: (1) K (2) O (3) S (4) H (5) F (6) Q (7) GG (8) II (9) R (10) T (11) C (12) U (13) N (14) DD (15) G (16) E (17) B (18) HH (19) J (20) D (21) I (22) V (23) W (24) A (25) X (26) EE (27) Y (28) Z (29) M (30) P (31) L (32) AA (33) BB (34) CC (35) FF. SCORING: 31-35 = Excellent; 28-30 = Good; 24-27 = Average; Below 23 = Study time!



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T H E R E ' S O N L Y O N E

Shipwrecks '96

Niagara Divers' Association will present Shipwrecks '96 **March 2** in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. The one day symposium features Gary Gentile speaking on the *Lusitania* as well as five other speakers from both coasts. Cost is \$25 Canadian/\$24 U.S.; pre-registration is required.

For more information contact Jim Grice at (905) 356-7337; Dave Mekker at (905) 664-9389 or on the Internet at <http://www.w.vaxxine.com/nda>.

Scuba/Boating Flea Market

Caloosa Dive Club will host its 10th annual flea market **March 9** in the Garden Center in Ft. Myers, Florida. There will be both new and used items from all areas of the diving and boating industry.

For more information call Kevin at (941) 482-6762.

Sentry's Scuba & Watersports Expo

Sentry Pool & Scuba will sponsor a watersports expo on **March 10** at Black Hawk College in Moline, Illinois. There will be manufacturers' displays, travel and resort representatives, aquatic sports equipment, Discover Scuba (an introduction to scuba diving), a raffle and door prizes.

For more information call (309) 797-9721.

St. Petersburg Shell Show

The St. Petersburg Shell Club will hold its 49th annual shell show **March 15 to 17** at the Treasure Island Community Center in St. Petersburg, Florida. There will be marine and freshwater shells from around the world, shellcrafters, photographic, scientific and educational displays. Prizes will be awarded.

For ticket information call (813) 360-0586.

Beneath The Sea's 20th Anniversary Exposition

Beneath The Sea's 20th annual underwater exposition will take place **March 22 to 24** at the Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey. Major prizes will be awarded by the Aggressor Fleet, Peter Hughes Diving, Sunset House and others.

For information call (914) 793-4469; e-mail zig4bts@aol.com or visit on the Internet at <http://www.cyberus.ca/~bts>.

California Chocolate Abalone Dive

The 12th annual California Chocolate Abalone Dive is scheduled for **March 23** at San Carlos Beach in Monterey, California. Four hundred prizes will be given away, including trips to Grand Cayman and The Bahamas. Pre-registration is \$20; same day is \$23. Participants must be certified or they may free dive.

For information call (408) 375-1933 or fax (408) 375-3053.

Northwest Diving Rescue Workshop

Northwest Diving Rescue will hold its fifth annual workshop **March 23 to 24** at Everett Community College, Everett, Washington. The workshop features diving first aid training and certification and is a DAN Gold sponsor. For information contact Dennis K. Graver at (360) 387-8043; fax (360) 387-6683.

London International Dive Show '96

The London International Dive show will be held **March 23 to 24** at National Hall, Olympia, London. Visitors can peruse more than 125 displays of dive equipment, clothing, boats and training courses. There will also be a daily program of award winning films, seminars by well-known industry experts, exhibitions of U/W photography and a BSAC "Try Dive" pool.

For ticket information write to The Dive Show, Ltd., 55 High Street, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 8HA or call 01 81 943-4288; fax 01 81 977-1963.

Underwater Canada '96

Underwater Canada's 25th annual show will be held **March 29 to 31** at the Regal Constellation Hotel in Toronto, Canada. The show will premiere film footage of James Cameron's (*Terminator*, *The Abyss*) secret expedition to capture images of the remains of the *Titanic*. Seven other new underwater films by Dr. Joe MacInnis, Bob Talbot (*Free Willy*), Michael Gilbert and Danielle Alarie, Sport Diver TV's Jim Kozmik and John McKenney are scheduled for presentation. Also, Emory Kristof will present photographs and videos he took of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* for National Geographic.

For ticket information call (416) 426-7033 or fax (416) 426-7336.

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

6420 Wilshire Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515

(213) 782-2960

FAX (213) 782-2121

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

ALFRED A. BOVE, M.D., Ph.D.

JIM CHURCH

E.R. CROSS

RICK FREHSEE

STEPHEN FRINK

DENNIS GRAVER

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GERI MURPHY

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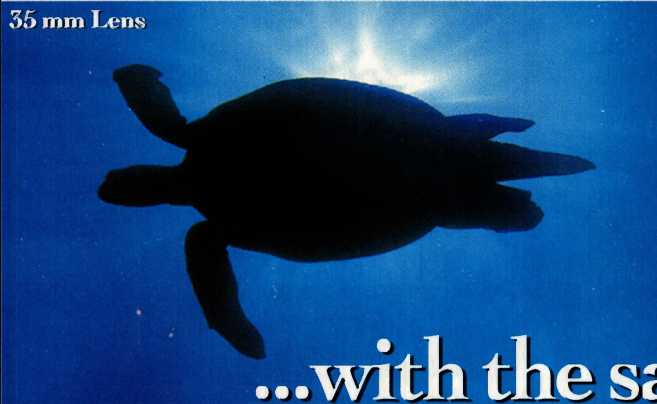
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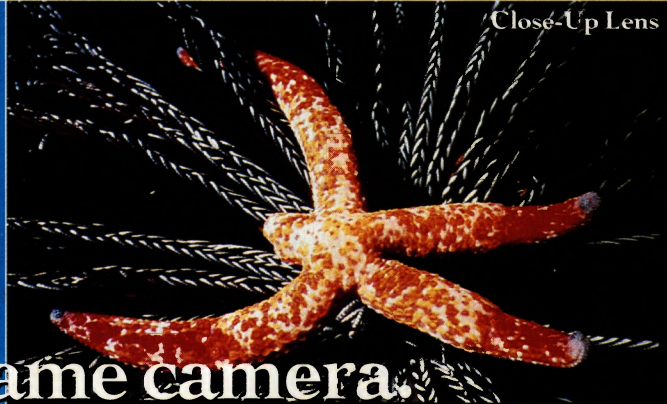
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All of these were shot on the same dive...

35 mm Lens

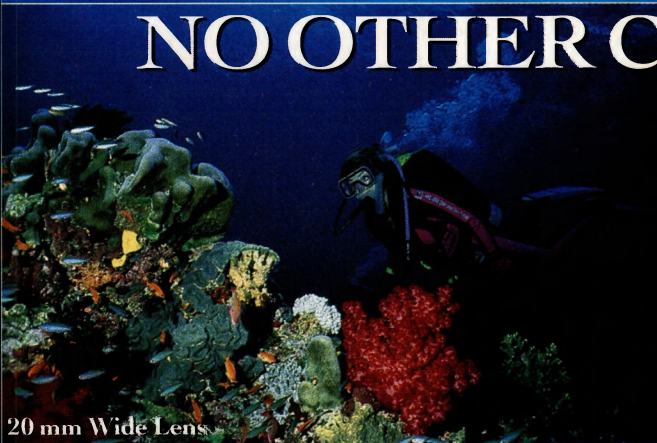


Close-Up Lens

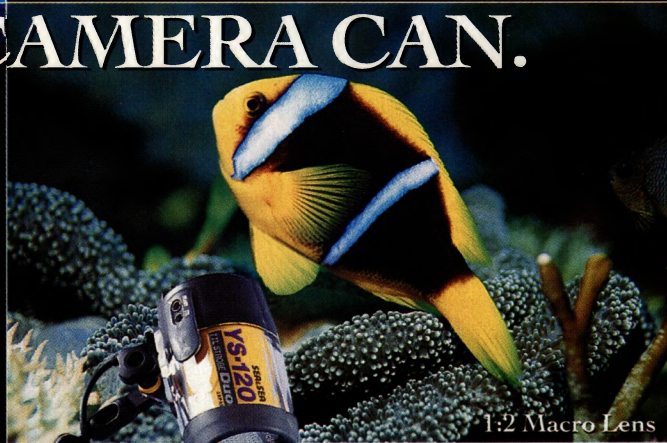


...with the same camera.

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1:2 Macro Lens

Photos by Joe Liburdi



Only the Motor Marine II-EX gives you four different lenses to choose from on a single dive. Its built-in 35mm lens is perfect for fish and diver portraits. Its

revolutionary built-in close-up lens reduces focusing distance to 18 inches for vivid full-frame images of the sea's smaller creatures. With a lens caddy on your strobe arm, you can carry wide angle and macro lenses, too. The exterior bayonet mount allows you to attach and detach lenses easily and quickly—underwater! Don't try that with any other camera. Because no other camera can.



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The Atlantis I can be used with an Aladin Nitrox dive computer, a hoseless unit that can be adjusted for any oxygen/nitrox mixture, including air. Dive profile data can be downloaded from the Aladin to a PC with special software.

There comes a time in every emerging technology when dreams become reality and 1996 is the time for recreational rebreathers. After four years of fanfare, futuristic magazine stories and vaporware, recreational rebreathers are a reality. You, the recreational diver, can actually buy one!

Manufactured by Dräger of Germany and distributed by Uwatec, the new Atlantis I is

technically a semi-closed circuit nitrox rebreather. But don't let the phrase semi-closed give you the wrong impression. This little baby very efficiently recycles your breathing gas with only a trickle of exhaust bubbles every fourth breath.

Of all the rebreathers currently under design, the Atlantis I is by far the most compact and lightweight. Stripped down it

They're Here At Last! Recreational



Stealth is a major advantage of the Dräger Atlantis I nitrox rebreather; wearing it a diver can closely observe and approach marine life that would normally flee those using scuba.

Instructor Rob Palmer (center) with Stuart Cove (left) and graduate student Avi Klapfer (right). Klapfer is the owner/operator of the *Undersea Hunter* in Costa Rica.



weighs only 33 pounds. Add a compressed air scuba back-up system (for safety) and it runs about 42 pounds.

Designed as a fully mechanical rebreather, the Atlantis I is as simple as you can get. There are no electrical components, no computers, no batteries.

The breathing supply is a small cylinder of nitrox (oxygen enriched air), mounted sideways at the bottom of the unit. It feeds nitrox into the breathing bag at a slow trickle. The nitrox is circulated in the rebreather via a closed circuit system of dual

breathing hoses, passing through an absorbent canister that filters out the carbon dioxide (from exhaled breaths).

The breathing gas circulates 'round and 'round in the system, while the rebreather removes carbon dioxide and replenishes the nitrox. Under average operating conditions, this rebreather is good for three dives (the equivalent of three full scuba tanks).

The Atlantis can be fitted with an entirely separate and independent system for safety back-up. It consists of a small com-

pressed air cylinder, mounted on the right side of the rebreather and equipped with a single hose regulator. Should you encounter any difficulties during the dive, you simply switch from the dual hose rebreather to the single hose scuba. An extra long hose on the regulator allows quick, easy application in a buddy breathing emergency situation. Dräger has thought of everything!

HOW DO YOU GET ONE?

Dräger AG is a German company that has been building rebreathers for more than 89 years—primarily for commercial and military usage. It is considered the top company in this field, having designed both underwater and aerospace breathing systems for NASA and Boeing Aircraft.

Dräger launched the Atlantis I as a joint venture with Uwatec, a Swiss company that produces the Aladin dive computers. Uwatec is a perfect match with Dräger, as it recently unveiled its new Aladin Nitrox hoseless dive computer. Working together, the two companies have produced the world's first recreational rebreather at a reasonable price. Uwatec USA has already imported 200 to 300 units into the U.S. and will be receiving 100 units per month from Germany.

In the meantime, Uwatec USA has been setting up dealers across America, as well as a program for rebreather training and certification. It has wisely adopted a sales policy that a customer must first receive training before purchasing a rebreather.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Learning how to operate and dive the rebreather is comparatively easy but crucial to your safety. You can't just strap it on and go diving. Rebreathers operate much differently than open circuit scuba and nitrox is definitely different than air. So, before you shell out the bucks for an Atlantis I, you must learn how to use one.

Uwatec USA is doing its best to make the training as easy and convenient as possible. Most rebreather dealers and many resorts will provide training/certification courses. At present, all Atlantis I rebreather training is conducted under the auspices of TDI (Technical Diving International)—one of the major nitrox training organizations.

For my course, I traveled to New Providence Island and visited Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean—one of the largest resort dive centers in The Bahamas. Stuart and Michelle Cove run one of the best shark dive programs, as well as a dedicated nitrox dive boat, a full service nitrox fill station and a brand new underwater photo center.

(Continued on Page 52)

Rebreathers

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY



Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, in The Bahamas, has an ample supply of recreational rebreathers for daily training courses as well as a certified nitrox station for prompt fills.

Harvey's Titanium Aqua Capsule

Stay Warm and Dry in the Cold and Wet!

BY TY SAWYER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

Drysuit envy. It's what happens when all those layers of wetsuit neoprene no longer beat back the chilly, 52°F waters. It's what happens when you peel off your wetsuit and the wind-chill factor embraces your wet, exposed, blue-tinged regions. You look across the deck and the diver in the drysuit is daintily dabbing away the sweat from his forehead, smiling, cozy, warm—and dry. Drysuit envy. It's also what other drysuit manufacturers will feel when they appraise the latest design from the innovative people at Harvey's. The Titanium Aqua Capsule is Harvey's new flagship and rightfully so. In the areas of comfort, design, technology and style the Aqua Capsule has made significant advancements and a solid statement.

TITANIUM FOIL NEOPRENE

Titanium is used to toughen steel alloys, to reinforce deep sea submersibles against hull crushing pressures and extensively in the military as protective armor—and, now, to make drysuits warmer and more *flexible*? That catches one a bit off guard. But, I can state unequivocally that this is the most comfortable neoprene drysuit I've ever donned and it's certainly warm, too (I tested the suit in 58°F water wearing only a Polarfleece diveskin underneath and stayed quite toasty). The way it works is the supple, 6.5mm neoprene sheet is surrounded by a layer of nylon on both sides. In between the nylon and on both sides of the neoprene sheet is the titanium foil. The titanium barrier creates an exceptionally reflective surface radiating heat inward and deflecting cold. According to tests, drysuits with the titanium foil barrier are 20 percent warmer than regular neoprene drysuits. These suits are also a good deal lighter than normal neoprene drysuits.

CONSTRUCTION

Harvey's has poured technological advancements into nearly every crevice of this drysuit. Every seam receives three coats of drysuit glue and the interior seams are covered with a cloth tape that has been heat sealed in place. Besides the titanium foil neoprene, the suit features Teflon impregnated skin-in at the wrist cuffs and neck. The fit is snug but not uncomfortable. It's best to use a silicone spray (liquid dish soap will do in a pinch) in these two areas for ease of donning and to provide a better seal against water intrusion by not overstressing the seams. I found both areas allowed a surprisingly negligible amount of seepage. I also liked the feel of neoprene versus a nylon shell in the water—it felt less like a watertight bag and more a part of the undersea environment.

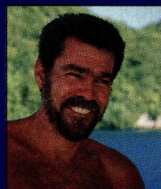
The exhaust valve and power inflation valve are both new, low profile, high performance, Si-Tech valves made in Sweden. The exhaust valve is on the left bicep and can be adjusted for automatic or manual dumping. For manual air dump, turn the exhaust valve clockwise. Firmly depressing the button allows air to escape. For automatic air dump, turn the valve counter-clockwise. Air will automatically purge when you raise your left shoulder and arm and stop when you lower your arm. This is a tricky skill to perfect and, as a result, most divers (including this one) prefer manual. The exhaust valve also doubles as the overpressure relief valve and can be adjusted in the water. The power inflation valve, on the center of the chest, is completely adjustable, allowing you to position the LP hose for your comfort or rigging configuration.

(Continued on Page 66)



Harvey's titanium foil neoprene drysuit features adjustable Si-tech valves, Teflon impregnated skin-in wrist cuffs and neck skirt, heavy-duty boots and Swiss Kevlar kneepads.

Upon
The Sea
The
Waves
Dance
Beyond
The Sea
And
Its Waves
The Sun
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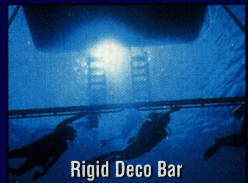
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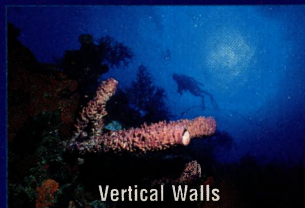


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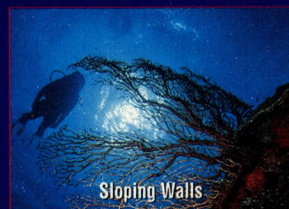
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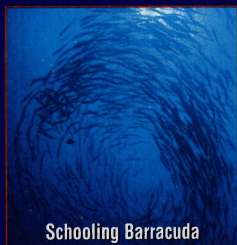
Belize, Central America



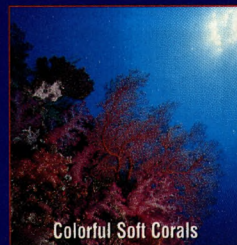
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Underwater Mapping

BY JEANNE B. SLEEPER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFFREY BOZANIC

Editors note: This and the next Advanced Diving will overview non-scientific surveying and mapping of underwater sites. This month we prepare you for the dive; next month we'll describe the actual dive and follow-up paperwork. This information has been simplified and as much math as possible eliminated. A scientist's or serious cave diver's standard for precision surveying and mapping would be greater than the scope of this article.

Mapping may seem an unnecessary skill—until you can't find the specific parts of scattered wreckage, the small finger reef that always has nudibranchs or the artificial reef. Perhaps you are bottle collecting and need to identify artifact piles to try and establish a pattern. When you need to locate various sites underwater, it is extremely helpful to have a plot map showing their relative locations and distances.

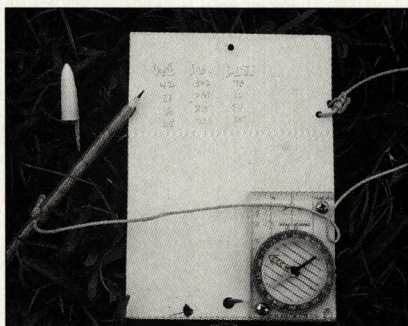
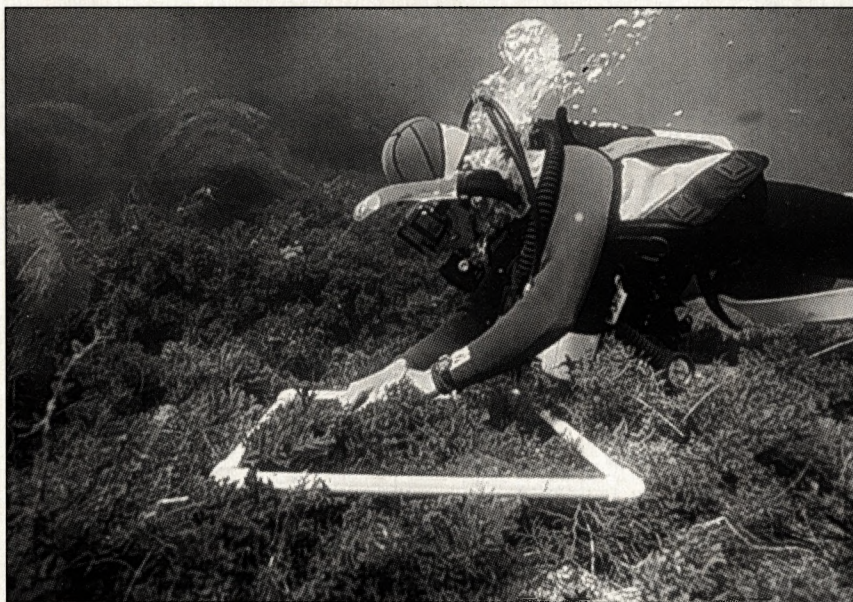
Most local knowledge maps are made by divers who frequent a certain site. They want to be able to relocate a specific place and draw the maps for their personal information. Scientific divers studying an area draw highly accurate maps and, over a period of time, take organism census counts at the same area. Cave divers survey for personal interest and safety. In the interest of diver safety, cave penetration maps are rarely shared beyond the trained cave diving community.

In previous articles this column has covered basic underwater navigation (August and September 1994) and searching (September and October 1995). It may be helpful for you to review those articles.

SURVEY PRE-PLANNING

It's one thing to make a simple sketch on a slate in the midst of a dive and quite another to plan a survey. Before the dive, you need to:

- Select a survey diving partner
- Inventory your combined diving equipment
- Determine what additional gear to acquire
- Buy, borrow or make surveying supplies
- Narrow your objective for the survey
- Commit the time to plan, execute and record the survey
- Agree in advance how accurate and



Above: Scientists often fabricate PVC pipe in square meters for their count areas. Left: The basic underwater surveying tools: compass, slate and pencil.

detailed a map you are committed to producing

- Decide who is doing what underwater, so you can master the needed skills by practicing on land
- Agree upon a set of hand signals that are simple, understood and able to be given with one hand
- Do not get discouraged when it takes several dives to survey a small area or accomplish a single task

For some surveys, it helps to make an exploratory dive just to scope out the area. This gives you an idea of how much line, the number of markers, the amount of air etc., that you may need to make the actual survey. Plan specific tasks or objectives for each dive. For example: "We will lay one baseline and take ten measurements on this dive."

SURVEYING TOOLS. The basic tool box

for surveying includes:

- A baseline anchored at each end
- Knotted line and reel
- Tape measure
- Markers for survey points
- Anchor points (nails, sand screws) and hammer
- Compass
- Slate and pencil

Specialized surveys could require additional equipment. A marine biologist might want to count the number of starfish or do a summary of all organisms in an area. This type of survey is commonly done by laying a baseline on the bottom as a reference. Then one meter squares are marked off on alternate sides of the baseline. The census is done within the squares. Scientists often fabricate a PVC pipe square meter frame or meter stick to show the borders of their count area.

If the baseline is always laid in the exact same place, divers can position their meter squares and recount the same zone on many different dates. Comparative data can show trends that may be helpful in predicting the other areas of the reef or

(Continued on Page 116)

One may think that beauty is a minor feature for a regulator. However, if beauty combines hydro-dynamic shapes, high-tech materials, and ergonomics, then it becomes a major feature. At least as important as the many characteristics that make the MR-22 Abyss DFC regulator perform unique under the most severe conditions, the widest range of temperatures, and at extreme depths. ● Designed for extreme diving, the Abyss is therefore ideal for recreational diving. It is an advanced version of the MR-12 Voltrex DFC, which has been recently approved (September 1993) as "substantially surpassing the Class A ratings" by the US Navy Experimental Diving Unit. The brand new design of its first stage allows optimum hose positioning and features two inclined HP ports used for pressure/depth consoles, air integrated computers, and redundant pressure gauges. ● Moreover, the MR-22 Abyss DFC first stage incorporates an upgraded DFC (Dynamic Flow Control) system, which delivers consistent high performance breathing characteristics under all conditions, while the limited internal components are virtually maintenance-free for your increased diving safety. ● The MR-22 Abyss DFC ... how could divers expect anything more from technology? It's not by chance that it's from Mares.

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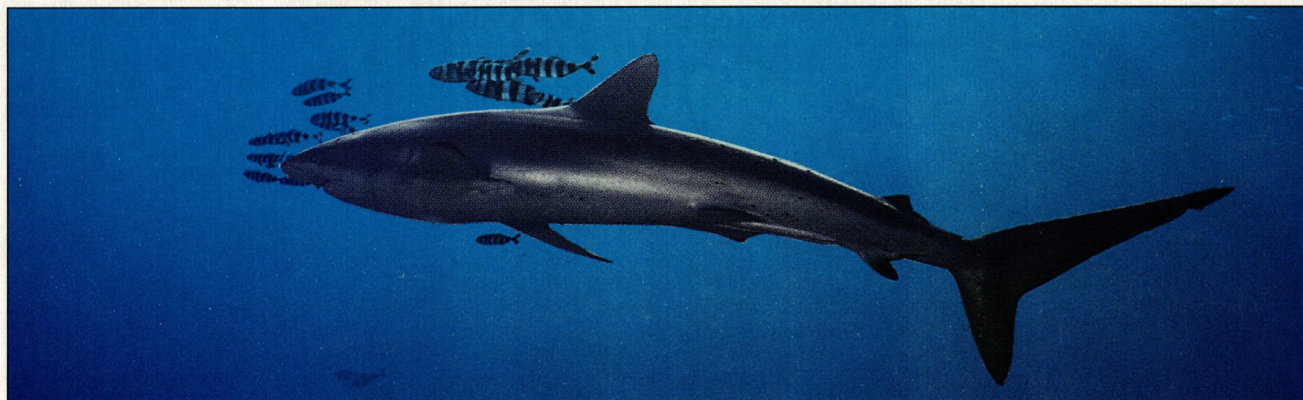
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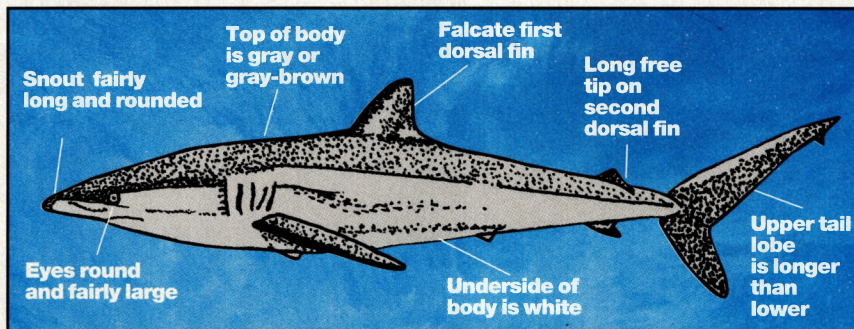


TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

The rest of my group had already descended to deeper parts of the wreck. I remained in the shallows, photographing a large wheel. Overhead the second dinghy motored by, dropping six more divers in the water. Suddenly, a swift moving shark appeared, swimming between the divers on the surface and me on the bottom. Small black and white Pilotfish, juvenile jacks, struggled to stay in front of and alongside the six foot shark. All I could think of was how beautiful she was. The clear sapphire waters were a perfect backdrop. The bright sun on the shark made her look as if she was crafted of shiny stainless steel. I ascended a bit and watched as the fish circled and came back. This time I anticipated her path and snapped three photos before she disappeared in the blue.

My Silky encounter occurred at the **Brothers Islands** in the Red Sea. Silkies, among the most abundant sharks, are common in both the tropical Atlantic and the Pacific as well as the Red Sea. Named for their relatively smooth skin—the “scales are small and compressed” (*Dictionary of Sharks*)—they are hard to identify by sight. Indeed, my photos were seen by three experts, the last one finally confirmed my suspicions.

Silkies are members of one of the largest shark families, the Requiem Sharks. They have the typical *Carcharhinid*'s sleek body, circular eyes, two dorsal fins and an anal fin, and a tail with an upper lobe longer than the lower. The fins can be unmarked or dusky-tipped.



The one I photographed had dark shaded fin tips.

The features that separate Silkies from other *Carcharhinus* are a first dorsal that originates well behind the rear tips of the pectorals and the very long free tips of the second dorsal and anal fins. Silkies are also slimmer than some of their cousins.

Having a tooth from such a shark would make identification easy but it wouldn't be wise to try to obtain one! Silkies, you see, have been known to bite humans. To those who have dived with Silkies at the **Shark Buoy** in The Bahamas, this seems absurd; the small schooling juveniles there are handled by divemasters. Divers have also dived with juveniles near **El Bajo**, in the Sea of Cortez, without incident.

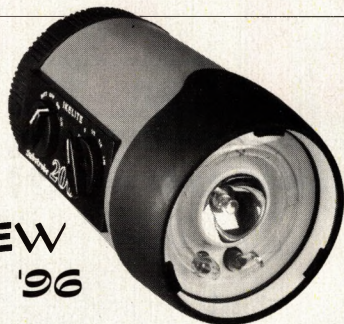
Any *Carcharhinid*, however, can be dangerous. A British diver recently discovered this off Port Sudan in the Red Sea. Diving late in the afternoon (5:30 pm), he was chased out of the water and up on a reef by three Silkies. He was forced to fend them off with his camera while awaiting rescue by a dinghy dispatched from his live-aboard. Herein lies another caution: Most sharks seem

Because its scales are small and compressed, the Silky Shark has relatively smooth skin, thus its name. One of the most abundant sharks, it is found in warm Atlantic and Pacific waters as well as in the Red Sea, where the photo was taken.

much more inclined to bite late in the afternoon. I have noticed this with Blues off California and other sharks in the Red Sea. In the morning they meander and taste; in late afternoon they attack and bite. Silkies are abundant, have been used in numerous experiments by researchers and inhabit the waters humans love to dive in. Their numbers and proximity to humans give them opportunities to bite. Because they can grow to lengths of nearly 10 feet, they are not sharks one should dismiss as harmless.

Silkies are found in shallow and deep waters and in the open sea, although they seem to prefer staying near land. They bear live young, 2 to 14 per litter, with a yolk-sac placenta. Their preferred prey is bony fishes but they also eat squid and pelagic crabs. 

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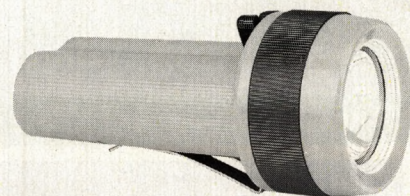
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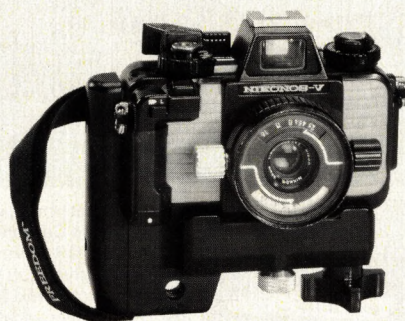
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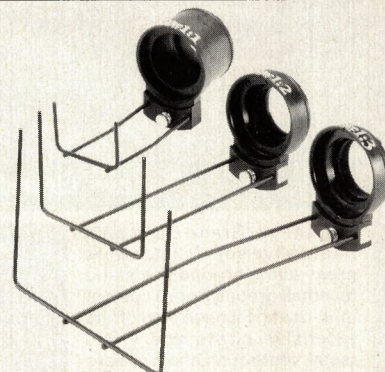
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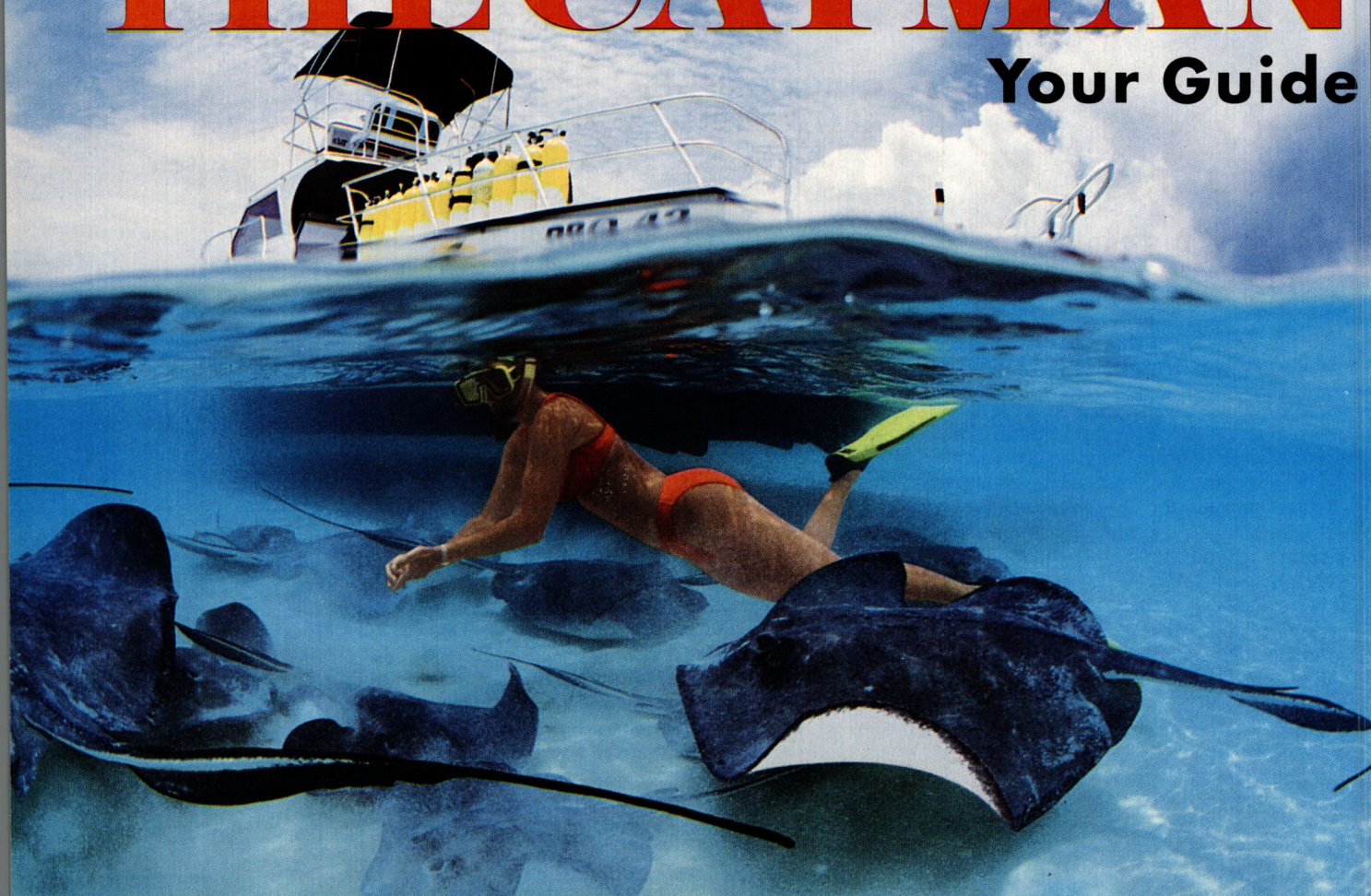
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THE CAYMAN

Your Guide



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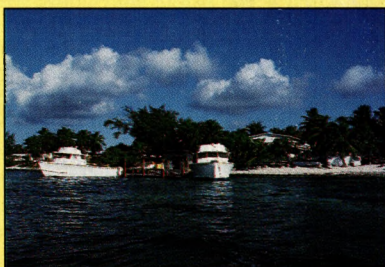
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Divers Unlimited is a pioneer in diver education, successfully turning divers into instructors for more than 20 years. And, DU has been recognized by PADI as the Number 1 Training Facility in the United States. Dave Inman and his staff

of instructor trainers are full time professionals and proud of their many PADI Certificates of Recognition for Excellence. I read from a selection of comments made by recent graduates and was impressed by the confidence these new instructors obtained through programs at Divers Unlimited.

WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY: At DU instructor candidates receive extra attention, learn their skills at a fully operational dive shop and enjoy the experience. Anne felt DU instructor trainers addressed the individual needs of each student and made themselves available whenever needed.

Jennifer was prepared for a stressful time but discovered how much fun it can be to teach

diving. Michael thought the entire program was enjoyable and educational; he was relaxed but confident and appreciated the exceptional facilities and organization. Rob thanks the DU instructors for sharing their valuable experiences—at the Instructor Examination (IE), he felt his group was better prepared than candidates from other areas.

At Divers Unlimited the instructors are always happy and available to help students, whether it be to strengthen someone's knowledge of physics or review a lecture. Every day they teach dive instruction and it shows. DU graduates are well prepared professionals with valuable hands-on training. Because of DU's small groups, the instructor trainer to student ratio is low. This allows direct feedback and a better sharing of knowledge.

Through years of experience, Divers Unlimited has designed its training around two programs, the Triad and the Gold. The Triad takes 27 days to complete and includes courses from Rescue Diver to Instructor, the backbone of an instructor's education (and job requirements). The Gold is a post graduate program that takes 22 days to complete and includes instructor courses from Medic First Aid through Resort Specialist. Future employers look first at prospective employees who have completed the Gold Program because it takes an instructor through the real world elements

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DONNA MCLAUGHLIN

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The Instructor Prep course alleviates much of the stress that can accompany the Instructor Development Course. When you take time to practice in pool sessions, study physics and present academic topics in advance you will be better prepared for the IDC.

The Instructor Development Course qualifies you for the Instructor Examination and your PADI Open Water Instructor Certification. You will become familiar with the entire teaching arena; pool, classroom and open water. The IDC includes role playing in difficult problems, variable conditions, superb evaluations and a nice schedule to help you learn without exhaustion. If you are hot to work in diving but have not been certified for at least a year, a minimum requirement from PADI, DU offers you a unique option. You can take the IDC after six months and work as an Assistant Instructor, which gives you real, on the job experience.

Divers Unlimited's goal is to turn you into a successful dive professional and it is willing to stand behind its commitment. When you take the Instructor Prep and Instructor Development Courses

you get the Instructor Certification Warranty. If, for any reason, you do not complete the IE (DU students have a 98 percent success rate), you can return to an IPC and IDC at no additional charge. This is a valuable consideration when you are investing in your dive instructor education.

THE GOLD PROGRAM: If you want to work at a dive resort or a full service dive operation, this series of courses will earn you the skills dive operators are looking for. Divers Unlimited regularly works with hundreds of dive shops, placing instructors in their operations. The company has done this successfully for 20 years, designing the Gold Program to produce qualified employees. When you complete this program you will be certified to teach eight different PADI specialty courses, as well as Medic First Aid, Dan/PADI Oxygen and Nitrox. The Nitrox Instructor certification is new to the Gold Program and is receiving a lot of interest. DU keeps graduates on the cutting edge with new developments in all areas of diving. Graduates will be certified as a U.S. Divers regulator repair technician, a PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer and a Resort Specialist. They will visit a hyperbaric chamber, learn about marketing and sales, compressor repairs, advanced accident management, reef awareness and ecology, seamanship and boat handling. The Triad Program lands grads on their feet, the Gold Program gives them a running head start!

JOB PLACEMENT: As Dave Inman, director of training, explained, "If we don't send the dive operators what they need we won't be able to find placements for our next set of graduates." Divers Unlimited has been placing its graduates for years; dive operators respect its reputation and return time and again for more employees. Dive operators are always looking for good employees to guide wall dives, run night dives, teach photo and video and fill tanks. Divers Unlimited can connect graduates to the area and size of operation they are interested in. Often dive instructors have conducted interviews and have jobs lined up prior to completing their courses at DU.

EMPLOYED INSTRUCTORS: Diana, a

Gold Program graduate who now works as a dive instructor in the Florida Keys, says the extra certifications and knowledge she obtained at DU is what got her hired. She enjoys teaching new divers about reef awareness. Diana also works in the shop, closing sales or booking dive charters, using the techniques from the sales and marketing classes she had in the Gold Program.

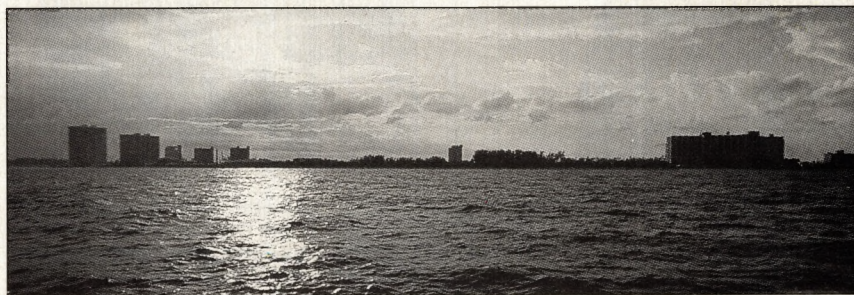
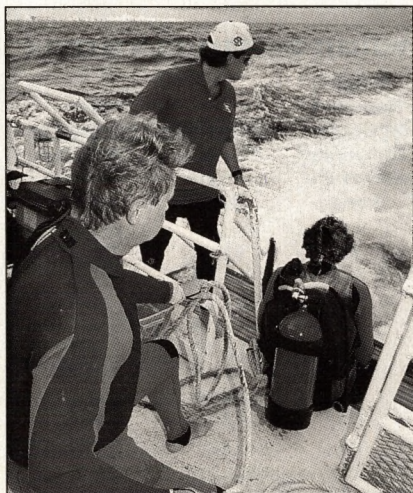
Mike took DU's Triad and Gold Programs and then worked on St. Thomas and Puerto Rico, two areas he really wanted to dive. Now, five years later, he is an IDC staff instructor, back at Divers Unlimited. He still remembers the first role playing sessions in his IDC and how they prepared him for the real world of dive instruction. I observed Mike teaching an open water course on an afternoon dive trip. He answered all of the students' questions, took care of a minor inflator problem, provided them with confidence and showed them a good time. He enjoys diving for a living.

FACILITIES: Divers Unlimited has everything you need to learn about dive shops and resorts. It is a complete retail facility that stocks everything from O-rings to complete dive systems. It also provides hydrostatic testing equipment, a state of the art equipment repair station, Olympic sized pool, complete rental line and a nitrox/compressed air system. Its dive boats make trips daily.

CONCLUSION

There are many skills required to get rewarding positions in diving and Divers Unlimited can provide you with them. DU's experience will eliminate wasted time and money spent on programs that are not geared toward a career in diving. When you enter DU's programs be a sponge—soak up the valuable information! With your new background and reliable work you will find a new life as a dive professional.

Contact Divers Unlimited for your instructor training and for dive trips to Hollywood's wrecks and reefs. Call (800) 289-3483 or (954) 981-0156. You can fax DU at (954) 963-5255 or write to Divers Unlimited, 6023 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, FL 33024. 🐠



The peaceful sunset over Ft. Lauderdale (above) stands in stark contrast to the intense, high energy training (left) that instructor candidates receive in real world conditions.

Sea Quest Quickdraw

The Freedom of an Integrated Weight System

BY TY SAWYER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

It is the simplest note that sparks the storm of change. Sea Quest has embraced simplicity and delivered an engineering *coup de grace* of startling functionality. The engineers have developed a BC with an integrated weight system that results in unprecedented freedom of movement and significantly reduced equipment intrusion. Toes are no longer imperiled by dropped lead; you no longer need worry about leaping off the side of the dive boat only to feel your weightbelt slip off. In its most basic essence, Sea Quest has made diving easier. In doing so, as you will see, Sea Quest has made diving safer.

INTEGRATED WEIGHT SYSTEM

For any integrated weight system to work it needs to function properly and safely. After all, the first piece of gear we ditch during an emergency is the weightbelt. Sea Quest accomplishes this task with an ingenious innovation.

There are three elements involved: the ditchable weight pockets, or modules, the weight compartments and two counterbalancing, non-ditchable weight compartments on the back of the BC. The weight modules hold up to 10 pounds each (I found the soft, shot-style

weights easier to use) and are contoured for an ergonomic fit around the waistline. The weight modules have two touch-fastener flaps; one to secure the weight in the module itself and the other to attach the module to the BC. On the outer flap is a large, bright fluorescent green plastic handle. When in place the module's handles are positioned low on the hips for a quick and easy grab. The non-ditchable weight compartments hold up to five pounds each (again, secured with touch-fastener flaps) bringing the total weight capacity to 30 pounds—20 pounds

ditchable; 10 non-ditchable.

To ditch the weight modules, simply pull the green handles forward (like drawing two six-guns) and let go. That's it. There's no fumbling for the weightbelt buckle and opening your BC cummerbund by mistake; no wasted movement; no confusion; no getting entangled in any other equipment. It is truly the



The contoured weight modules fit snugly into innovative compartments designed for quick ditching and a sleek, streamlined profile.



WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION MATRIX

Weight Required for Neutral Buoyancy at Surface (lbs.)	Releasable Pockets Front (lbs.)	Non- Releasable Pockets Rear (lbs.)
<12	All	0
14	12-14	0-2
16	12-16	0-4
18	12-16	2-6
20	12-16	4-8
22	12-16	6-10
24	14-16	8-10
26	16-18	8-10
28	18-20	8-10
30	20	10

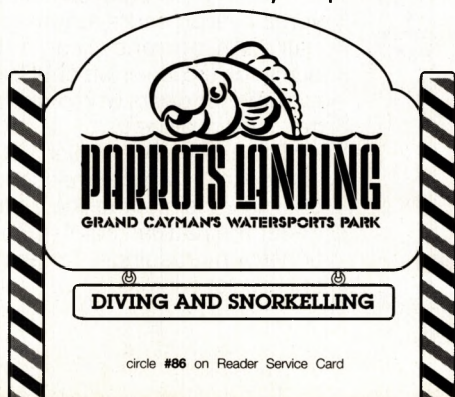
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	3 Nts	5 Nts	7 Nts
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CAYMAN ISLANDER	\$380	\$622	\$865
HOLIDAY INN	\$387	\$634	\$882
INDIES SUITES	\$429	\$705	\$981
SEAVIEW	\$273	\$444	\$616
SLEEP INN	\$334	\$547	\$759
TREASURE ISLAND	\$368	\$603	\$838

Prices are based on double occupancy & include a two tank boat dive everyday except day of arrival and day of departure. Unlimited shore diving, hotel, gratuities & taxes.

CAYMAN CONDOS

	3 Nts	5 Nts	7 Nts
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS	\$331	\$541	\$751
GRAPETREE/COCOPLUM	\$321	\$524	\$728
LONDON HOUSE	\$394	\$646	\$899
TARQUINN MANOR	\$319	\$521	\$672
VICTORIA HOUSE	\$338	\$553	\$767
VILLAS OF THE GALLEON	\$390	\$639	\$889

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SEA QUEST QUICKDRAW BC

fastest ditch in the West (or anywhere, for that matter!).

Most of us won't be ditching weights that often (hopefully) but we'll all be able to appreciate the added stability this system provides. The front and rear symmetry of the weights offset tank rotation and ensure proper underwater balance. On the surface, the weight proportions allow for a more vertical, heads-up position. The modules are so

easy to use that installation can be accomplished either in the water or at the surface.

CONSTRUCTION

The Quickdraw is deceptively simple. The sleek, streamlined profile is packed with features you'll soon take for granted.

The low profile, jacket-style BC is made from tough 420 denier nylon and contoured to provide impressive freedom of movement. The single bladder is coated with urethane on the inside and the design (air on the back and under

the arms) has outstanding buoyancy and stability characteristics. The harness is plush lined and padded with a generous amount of Neutrafoam for a comfortable, snug fit.

The shoulder straps are padded, plush lined and double adjustable. For a perfect fit, simply pull down on the D-rings or up on the buckle. When the dive is finished, the quick-release buckles permit effortless, step away doffing.

The depth compensating cummerbund is padded and secures with a touch-fastener strip. For extra snugness, there is a floating chest fastener with a quick-release buckle.

All your accessories and dangling components can be secured for a shipshape and tidy profile. The ample pockets are lined with mesh for quick draining, close securely with touch-fasteners and the left pocket has a snap hook inside for your keys. Beneath the right pocket is a female quick-release buckle attachment and beneath the left pocket is a multi-purpose D-ring. There are also D-rings on the right shoulder harness and the on the front of the left pocket for gauge/alternate air retainers.

TRIMLINE INFLATOR

Adding to the clean look is the Trimline power inflator. Unique to Sea Quest, it features a groove to secure your LP hose for a streamlined fit. A touch-fastener airway retainer keeps your inflator hose at the front of the body, away from obstacles and available for instant use.

There are two ways to vent air using the Quickdraw. First is the conventional oral inflation/deflation valve; the second, and more convenient, is with the Versavalue. A gentle tug on the inflator hose opens the Versavalue on the left shoulder, allowing excess air to vent—nearly effortless. A special design inhibits water from entering the BC during the normal venting process. The Versavalue also vents overpressure automatically. An optional rear pull dump, on the lower left of BC, is available for divers who prefer a head down descent.

The blue power inflation button is exactly where it needs to be—near the mouthpiece, right under the natural thumb position when grasping—for easy trimming at depth.

COMPARISON OF SEA QUEST BUOYANCY COMPENSATORS

Model	Black Diamond	Spectrum 4	Quickdraw	Diva	Predator	Infinity	Dimension XP	Spectrum 3	Dimension	Excel	Spectrum 2	Spectrum 1
Price	\$575	\$490	\$450	\$440	\$440	\$420	\$420	\$405	\$375	\$365	\$335	\$255
Fabric	840 denier nylon	840 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	Outside—840 denier nylon, inside—420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon
Shoulder Straps	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle	Yes, with double adjustable quick-release buckle
Waistband	Adjustable Multiset waistband	Suspension strap system, padded, depth compensating cummerbund	Padded depth compensating waistband and floating chest fastener	Adjustable Multiset waistband and floating chest fastener	Padded depth compensating waistband and floating chest fastener	Padded depth compensating waistband and floating chest fastener	Integral, padded, depth compensating harness	Suspension strap system, padded waistband and floating chest fastener	Padded depth compensating waistband and floating chest fastener	Padded depth compensating waistband	Padded depth compensating waistband	Padded waistband
Inflator	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual	Inflate/deflate, power or manual
Overpressure/Dump Valve	Incorporated into dump valve and rear	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve	Incorporated into dump valve
Pockets	Three	Expandable	Two low profile flaps; key hook	Two	Two	Two	Two, small and low profile flaps	Expandable	One fold down	Two, zippered	Two	One
Backpack	Contour pack with traction pad	Adjustable integral, with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Fixed integral with traction pad	Fixed integral with traction pad
Sizes/Lift (lbs.)	S—36 M—40 L—40 XL—40	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45 XXL—45	S—23 M—28 ML—31 L—36 XL—42	XS—18 S—23 M—28 L—31 XL—42	M—28 ML—31 L—36 XL—42	XS—18 S—23 M—28 ML—31 L—36 XL—42	S—24 M—28 ML—28 L—36 XL—40	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45 XXL—45	S—24 M—28 L—36 XL—40	S—20 M—30 ML—30 L—34 XL—34	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45
Colors	Black	Black/blue, Black/raspberry, Black/lime	Black, Black/blue, Black/raspberry	Black/raspberry, Black/purple	Black with gray/red accents	Black/purple, Black/blue	Black/blue, Black/lime	Black, Black/blue, black/	Black	Black, Black/blue	Black/blue, lime, Black/raspberry	Black, Blue/blue
Comments	Three dimensional bladder. Integral weight system, holds up to 32 pounds. Accommodates double cylinders. Intended for use by advanced/professional divers.	Heavy duty fabric and adjustable tank cradle.	Holds 20 pounds of releasable weight; 10 pounds of non-releasable weight.	Harness contours to figure, provides tank support and stability without excess pressure on chest. Three D-rings, gauge retainer clip.	Low profile, single bladder design with all adjustments. Suitable for tough conditions in warm or cold water.	Low profile, single bladder design with all adjustments. Suitable for both warm and cold water.	Back mounted air chamber with lighter fabric and non-adjustable tank cradle.	Same as Spectrum 4 with lighter fabric and non-adjustable tank cradle.	Back mounted air chamber with pleats for three dimensional expansion. Low profile harness. Fold down pocket.	Streamlined, low profile design. Ideal for warm and cold water divers.	Fully featured but without the "extras."	Sea Quest's most economical model.

CONTOUR PACK

Another unique feature of the Sea Quest BC line is the contour tank pack with traction pad. Raised grooves reduce tank travel and the contoured shape cradles the tank for exceptional stability. The hard plastic backpack is ergonomically designed to the fit curve of your back and is remarkably comfortable both in and out of the water. The tank band is made of nylon webbing and uses a rethreaded touch-faster and buckle design for a solid grip.

For the more adventuresome, the Quickdraw can even accommodate two tanks with an added, two bolt retaining system.

CONCLUSION

With an harmonious combination of features, superior performance, streamlined freedom of movement and the allure of one less encumbrance, the Quickdraw is definitely the way to go. Unless, that is, you have an old-fashioned affection for your weightbelt. I liked

USER COMMENTS

Integrated weight system:

"The integrated weight system is definitely the way to go. One less worry, tons more comfort and the weight release handles are in a more natural—thus safer—position for emergencies. I liked this BC so much I purchased one."

Comfort: "The fit is snug, comfortable and streamlined. The ergonomic design provides incredible freedom of movement."

Con: "The only detail I missed was a carrying handle."

this BC so much I purchased one and happily removed the weightbelt from my dive bag. Less is more and Sea Quest once again has delivered the goods.

The Quickdraw is available in black, black/blue or black/raspberry in sizes small through extra large. The Quickdraw is an exceptional value at the suggested retail of \$450. For more information on this innovative product write to Sea Quest, 2151 Las Palmas Drive, Carlsbad, California 92009 or call (619) 438-1101; fax (619) 438-3142. 🐟

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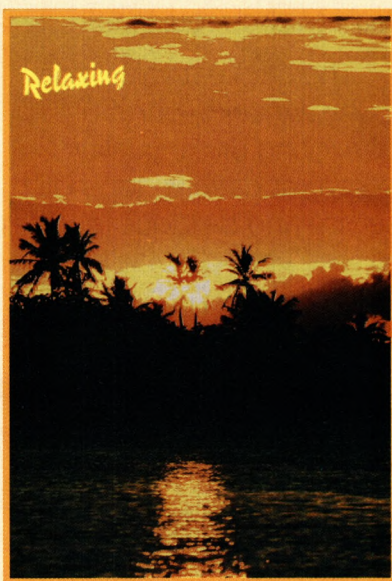


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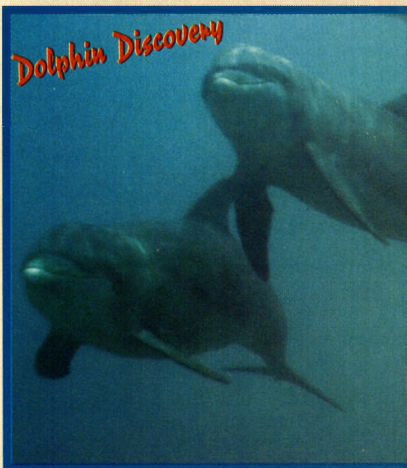
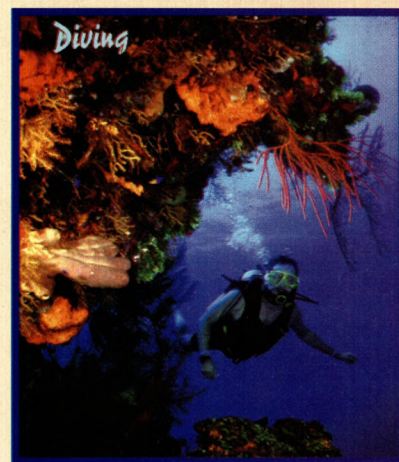
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Sidestepping the Pitfalls of Fisheye Dome Ports

7 Ways to Improve Your Extreme Wide Angle Techniques

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

One of the great benefits of using a 35mm SLR in a housing is the capability of fish-eye or extreme wide angle (14 to 18mm) photography. To use such exotic lenses, you will need a fisheye dome port—a port with a full 180 degree field of view. Fisheye domes expand your capabilities but can be tricky to operate. Here are seven ways to improve your extreme wide angle techniques.

1 CLEAN DOME INSIDE AND OUT. The fisheye dome can never be too clean. Close focus of a fisheye lens tends to exaggerate dirt specks and grease smudges. Using a soft cloth, wash the outside of the dome with soap and water.

Clean the inside of the dome with a lens brush and compressed air. Clean the inside of the camera housing with compressed air to remove dirt particles that might fall into the dome when your camera is pointed down.

2 SET EXPOSURE MODE ON MANUAL. Auto exposure modes (any of them) do not work well with fisheye or extreme wide angle lenses because they gather too much light from the upper part of the picture frame. The result is usually underexposure.

Set the exposure mode on manual. To determine the correct exposure, use an independent lightmeter or point the camera directly at the subject—at point blank range. You need to get a reflected light reading off the subject, not the ambient surface light.

If you are unsure about the lighting situation or your exposure setting, bracket your shots with at least one f/stop overexposure and one f/stop underexposure.

3 POSITION STROBE SIX INCHES BEHIND HOUSING. Strobe lighting with a fisheye dome is tricky because of the extreme wide angle coverage of the lens (180 degrees) and the dome's tendency to capture and reflect stray light rays.

Position your strobe(s) at least six inches behind the housing. In other words, hold your strobe way out to the

side and then move it to the rear. This will help eliminate hot spots and lens flares in what would otherwise be great pictures.

4 GET CLOSE, CLOSE, CLOSER. The wide angle capability of a fisheye lens is truly awesome: It will allow you to capture very large subjects at close range. The only drawback to this perspective is that the fisheye makes subjects appear very, very small at normal distances.

The only way to compensate for this optical idiosyncrasy is to get very, very close to your subject. Fill the frame, if possible. This need for closeness will often mean being a mere 12 to 18 inches from your subject.

5 POSITION SUBJECT IN CENTER OF FRAME. Another peculiarity of fish-eye lenses is the tendency to distort the image at the outer edges of the picture. For example, the 16mm f/2.8D AF Fish-eye-Nikkor produces curved lines at the extreme edges of the picture.

To avoid distortion of your primary image, position your subject in the center of the picture frame. If at all possible, compose your picture with the important subject matter in the center and open water or sand in the outer edges. This will reduce distortion to almost nil.

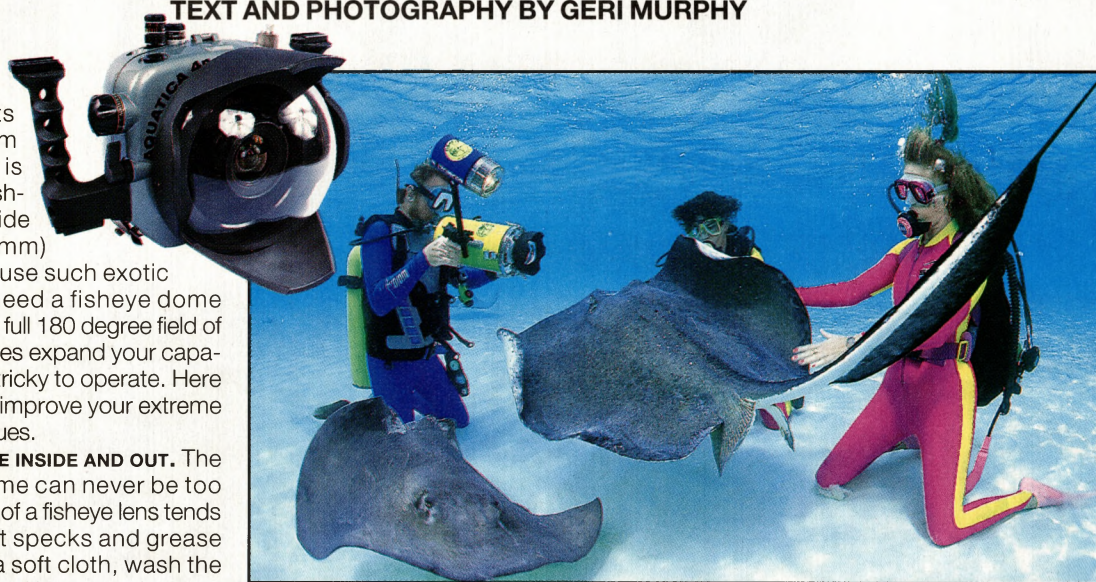
6 WATCH YOUR HORIZON. When using fisheye or extreme wide angle be especially careful about keeping the hori-

zon straight. In the case of underwater photography, the horizon is where the bottom (reef or sand) meets the open water.

The slightest tilt of your camera housing can cause the horizon to slant on a dizzying angle. This is because fisheye and extreme wide angle lenses tend to exaggerate straight lines. When composing your picture in the viewfinder, always check the horizon just before activating the shutter release.

7 ADD WEIGHT TO THE HOUSING. Because the fisheye dome envelops a large bubble of air, it causes the housing to float and has a tendency to point straight up. To regain neutral buoyancy and balance for your housing, you will need to add some lead weight (two to four pounds). An easy solution to this buoyancy problem is to link two ankle weights and wrap them around the housing (preferably where the dome flange connects with the housing front).

While fisheye domes may sometimes feel bulky and awkward to use, they can produce spectacular results and help make your pictures stand out from the crowd. 



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TEXAS



7 Great Wreck Dives in the Caribbean

Exploring Haunted Houses Under the Sea

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

There is nothing more mysterious or intriguing as exploring a sunken ship. History comes alive as you glide along passageways, cruise over silent decks and peer into shadowy compartments. Apparitions appear out of the misty depths but they are more likely to be fish than ghosts from the past.

If you are looking for the best wreck dives in the Caribbean, try some of these:

1 RMS RHONE/BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS: Considered the most beautiful shipwreck in the Caribbean, the *Rhone* is five miles from Tortola. A 310 foot steel hulled steamer that sank in a 1867 hurricane, she lies on a sloping reef with depths ranging from 20 to 80 feet. The forward half of the ship is still intact and the past 129 years of submersion have been kind to her. She is covered with a festive array of sponges, seafans and heavy marine growth—including virtual walls of bright Orange Cup Corals. The wreck is loaded with fish and considered one of the best night dives in the world.

2 BIANCA C/GRENADA: Unquestionably the largest intact, diveable shipwreck in the Caribbean, this 593 foot luxury cruise liner burned and sank off Grenada in 1961. When fire fighting and salvage attempts failed, the massive ship plunged to the bottom in 160 feet of water. The wreck lies one mile offshore, sitting upright with a list to starboard. Although the keel is at depths beyond safe recreational diving limits, visitors can reach her decks at 110 feet. The wreck is inhabited by a wide variety of marine life, including large groupers, turtles and occasionally, Jewfish. This wreck is reserved for experienced divers, as strong currents frequently sweep across the mammoth hulk.

3 STAVRONIKITA/BARBADOS: Another biggie among Caribbean shipwrecks is the 356 foot Greek freighter *Stavronikita*. Deliberately sunk in 1978 as an artificial reef, this Goliath lies one-quarter mile off the west side of Barbados. She sits upright in 130 feet of water, looking much like a ghost ship still underway. The immense wreck is the equivalent of a

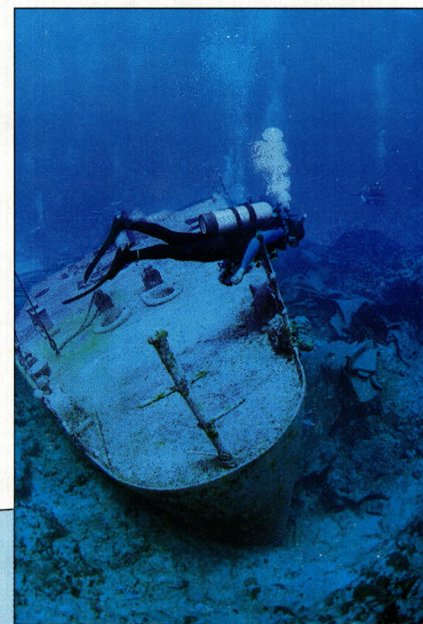
35 story skyscraper lying on the bottom. The great wreck attracts schools of Silversides and jacks, Barracuda, groupers and many other forms of marine life.

4 SUPERIOR PRODUCER/CURACAO: Still another intact shipwreck is a 200 foot steel freighter that operated between Curacao and Venezuela. She sank in 1977 while carrying a general cargo of clothing, perfume, luggage, wallets and liquor. The wreck lies in 100 feet of water, at the base of a steep coral slope just outside Willemstad Harbor. It is only 65 feet to the top of the wreck and visibility often exceeds 100 feet. Like many warm water wrecks, the *Superior Producer* is covered with encrusting corals and sponges in crimsons, vivid oranges and pastel pinks.



5 HILMA HOOKER/BONAIRE: Apprehended as a drug smuggler, this 236 foot steel hulled cargo ship was transformed into Bonaire's first artificial reef. She was deliberately sunk in 90 feet of water close to a dive site known as **Angel City**. Today, the wreck remains totally intact, providing an interesting opportunity for exploration and photography.

6 PRINCE ALBERT/ROATAN: One of the nicest shipwrecks in the Bay Islands is a small 144 foot steel hulled Panamanian freighter donated by Roatan entrepreneur Albert Jackson and converted into an artificial reef. She was sunk in 1985, just off CoCo View Resort, on the south side of Roatan. Because the vessel sits in the middle of a natural coral channel, she attracts numerous pelagics as



Wreck diving in the Caribbean is a feast for the senses. You can explore now silent decks and passageways and photo opportunities are abundant.

well as Barracuda, jacks and a school of Creole Wrasse.

7 ORO VERDE/GRAND CAYMAN: Of the five wrecks scattered around Grand Cayman, the 178 foot steel hulled *Oro Verde* is undoubtedly the most popular. She lies one mile directly off Seven Mile Beach's Holiday Inn. The sister ship of the U.S.S. *Pueblo*, the O.V. served in WW II and was subsequently converted to an inter-island cargo ship. Deliberately sunk in 50 feet as an artificial reef, she is a haven for a wide variety of tropical fish.

For more information about warm water wreck exploration in the Caribbean, consult your favorite dive travel specialist or contact those resort dive operators and live-a-boards advertising in this issue. 🐠

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Humpback Whales pass through the Turks and Caicos on their way to and from the warm waters of Silver Banks. Right: Jojo, a wild Bottlenose Dolphin, sometimes comes to visit people off Provo.



Whales Ahoy!

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor Sails in Search of Exciting Encounters

BY BONNIE J. CARDONE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY WAYNE HASSON

In the not so distant past, we could only sit and watch as a handful of men had thrilling encounters with whales, sharks, dolphins and other denizens of the deep. Today, however, an entire fleet of vessels stands ready to make our diving dreams come true. Ten Aggressor Fleet live-aboards routinely carry their guests to nonroutine underwater adventures around the world.

Take Humpback Whales for example. Every winter they travel to the warm waters of **Silver Banks**, south of the Turks and Caicos and about 80 miles north of the Dominican Republic, to court, cavort and bear their young. And, from mid-January through the first week of March, Captain Julie Jordan and her crew on the *Turks & Caicos Aggressor* take guests to this 500 square mile area to witness the whales' winter vacation. While whale sightings can never be guaranteed, *Turks & Caicos Aggressor* passengers saw Humpbacks on every trip in 1995. Also, since the whales pass Provo, West Caicos and French Cay on their way to and from Silver Banks, there is a chance of seeing and snorkeling with them on other *T & C Aggressor* trips.

Then there are sharks. In June, July and August, Nurse Sharks congregate by the hundreds off **French Cay**, a tiny uninhabited island southeast of West Caicos, accessible only by live-

aboard. The mating rituals of these usually placid sharks take place in only inches of water. Scuba is unnecessary, guests view all the activity on snorkel.

While mating Humpbacks and Nurse Sharks may be the highlights of a Turks and Caicos dive vacation, they aren't the only reason to visit these islands. Southeast of The Bahamas and north of the Dominican Republic, the Turks and Caicos are a British Crown Colony with a population of only 12,000. The air temperature averages 70 to 85°F year-round; the water, 78 to 82°F. The Turks consist of one island and 10 cays, the Caicos, of six islands and 30 cays. These are flat, arid islands, famed for their beautiful white sand beaches.

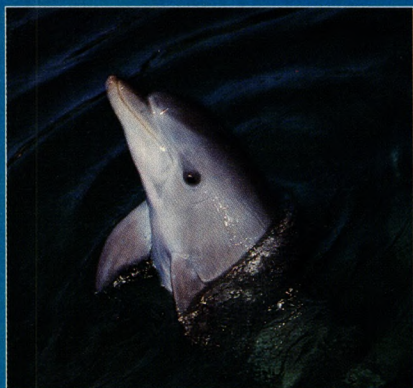
Because there are 7 islands and 40 cays, the dive sites are numerous. Because the islands are sparsely populated, these sites are little visited. And, the many land masses mean there is always a calm leeward side to dive.

The diving is on walls that start in 40 to 55 feet of water and drop to 100 feet and beyond. The prime sites visited by the *Turks & Caicos Aggressor* include Northwest Point, off Provo, West Caicos Channel, West Caicos and French Cay.

Everyone wants to dive with dolphins and off **Provo** you may just get a chance. This is the home of Jojo, a wild Bottlenose Dolphin. He's been coming into shallow water to interact with people for several years. Now when he shows up it's usually with a pod of other dolphins.



Nurse Sharks gather off French Cay in shallow water during the summer.



chance of seeing manta rays and squadrons of Spotted Eagle Rays. At **Tons of Sponges** the wall starts at 45 feet. For sure you'll see lots of sponges and smaller marine life but you might also see reef sharks.

THE BOAT

It's a safe bet that those divers you watched on TV in the past, those whose adventures you can emulate, didn't enjoy the comforts you will aboard an Aggressor Fleet vessel. The

The well appointed air-conditioned salon/dining area is also a favorite après dive gathering place. Here, guests can view commercially made movies or their own just shot videos. Light tables beneath the dining tables pull out, allowing still photographers to check their work (E-6 slide film is processed daily).

By now you probably know the Aggressor Fleet motto: "Eat, sleep, dive." You'll have ample opportunity to

(Continued on Page 132)

Off Provo's wild **Northwest Point**, there's a three mile long vertical wall, with several exceptional sites. One of them, **Shark Hotel**, offers sharks, Eagle Rays, Stingrays and Green and Spotted Moray Eels. The wall begins in 45 to 50 feet of water, plummets to a shelf at 80 to 100, then drops again, to well beyond sport diving depths.

Elephant Ear Canyon, off West Caicos, features a Turks and Caicos signature, an enormous Orange Elephant Ear Sponge. The one at 95 to 100 feet measures 10½ feet in diameter and is considered the largest one in the T & C. The sandy area you'll find under the boat is home to Garden Eels and Southern Stingrays; Eagle Rays and reef sharks are often seen off the wall.

Another West Caicos site, **The Gullies**, offers a passageway that drops to 80 feet. Undercuts in the passage are home to lobsters and crabs. Look for the grouper who likes photographers and, off the wall, Eagle Rays and turtles.

The West Caicos Channel offers a



Turks & Caicos Aggressor is 100 feet long, with a 22 foot beam. Her 14 to 16 passengers are accommodated in six double cabins and one quad. All of the cabins are air-conditioned. There are two heads with showers on the lower level, near the cabins, as well as a head on the dive deck and two freshwater showers on the dive platform.

Between dives guests often head for the top deck to catch some rays on a chaise lounge or enjoy the hottub. There's also a canopied area for those who prefer shade.

The 100 foot long *Turks & Caicos Aggressor* carries 14 to 16 divers very comfortably. Her main diving areas are Providenciales, West Caicos and French Cay but she travels to Silver Banks in the winter to view Humpbacks. Below: Colorful sponges decorate a wall in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

AGGRESSOR FLEET VESSELS

Vessel	Length	# Divers	Cruise Length	Price*
<i>Bay Islands Aggressor II</i> Honduras	110'	17	6 days	\$1,195
<i>Belize Aggressor II/III</i> Belize	110'	17	6 days	\$1,495
<i>Cayman Aggressor III</i> Cayman Islands	110'	17	6 days	\$1,495
<i>Galapagos Aggressors I/II</i> Ecuador	80'	14	6 to 10 days	\$2,195 (6 days)
<i>Kona Aggressor II</i> Hawaii	80'	10	6 days	\$1,695
<i>Okeanos Aggressor</i> Costa Rica	120'	20	10 days	\$2,695
<i>Palau Aggressor II</i> Palau	106'	16	6 days	\$1,995
<i>Truk Aggressor II</i> Truk Lagoon	100'	14	6 days	\$1,895
<i>Turks & Caicos Aggressor</i> Turks & Caicos	100'	16	6 days	\$1,295

*Special cruises, such as those with J-M Cousteau or Jim Church, cost more but there are also cruises offered at discount rates—ask when you book!



Wrecks Revisited and Diving Emergencies



BY E.R. CROSS

Something about wrecks fascinates divers. What kind of wrecks will start adrenaline flowing? The incongruity of an aircraft sitting on the ocean bottom might grab some divers. The awesome structure of a supertanker sitting upright in 150 feet of water will leave others wondering just where they are. A gaggle of destroyers shattered along a rocky shore may attract ardent wreck divers. Almost any kind of wreck will do. Perhaps a visit to three wrecks on the same dive? Let Peter Jensen tell it as it was.

In a recent letter Peter answered some questions about the wreck of the *Rio de la Plata* that sank in Acapulco Harbor (Technifacts, February 1996). Later in his letter he wrote, "I also want to add a few points about the seven WW I era flush

deck, four stack destroyers that went aground at Pt. Pedernales, California." The destroyers, seven of the 13 ships of Destroyer Squadron Eleven, are known as the Honda wrecks. Peter tells us, "The wrecks are named for the creek the DDs nearly went up without a paddle. The smaller point between Pedernales and Honda Creek is Honda Point. We call the outer rocks of Pedernales 'destroyer rocks.'" Peter added, "The entire area is generally nicknamed 'The Devil's Jaw' owing to the dozen wrecks that are within one-quarter mile of the coast."

Then Peter relived his great wreck dive. "I once came across three different major wrecks in one dive. First was the Japanese tanker *Nippon Maru*, which sank in 1933. Then I continued to the destroyer *Fuller* before ending the dive on the *Woodbury*." The last two wrecks were two of the seven destroyers that ran

aground in heavy fog. Jensen also pointed out that it was the intensive research and highly competent diving of the California Wreck Divers that relocated the wrecks in the late 1970s. Through their articles and displays at diving shows, the public and academic communities were made aware of these long forgotten wrecks.

Three of the crew of the *USS Delphy* and 20 from the *USS Young* died in the wrecks. There were several attempts to salvage the seven vessels. None was successful. However, the Navy did remove some material and some was reportedly removed by local residents. Also, the military entered into a contract to sell all seven wrecks to the highest bidder. Bids were opened on November 28, 1923. Owing to the rapid deterioration of the hulls in the pounding surf, there was little real salvage. Underwater, a few arti-

(Continued on Page 43)

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—B.L. Shurley
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—Bill Acker, owner



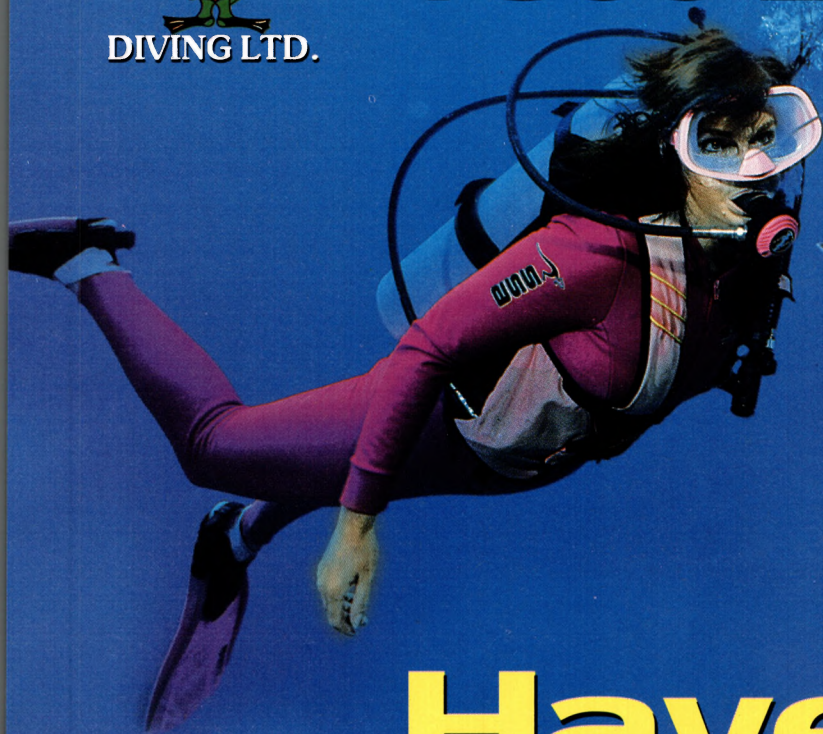



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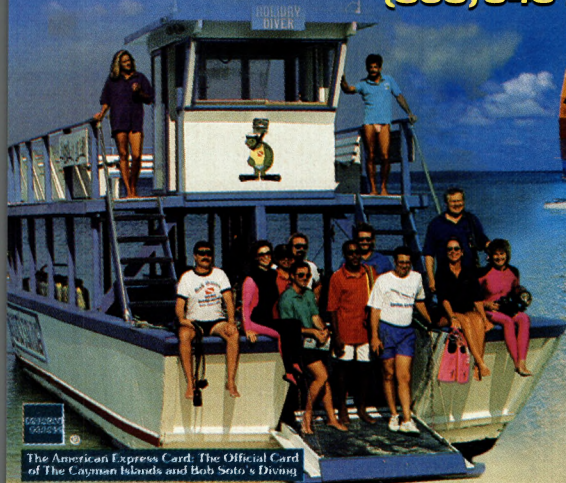
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Main photo: David Wolfe. UAW photo: Cathy Church



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TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 42)

facts remain. Some are found by alert divers who plan their dives to avoid heavy surf. Mostly, the seven wrecked DDs have simply disappeared under the crashing surf and shifting sands. Topside, a few pieces of metal that were once the frames, part of the keel or other strength members of the **USS Chauncey** may still be found. This vessel was driven quite far up onto the rocky shore.

The small tanker **Tampico** was another West Coast wreck that went aground. This one is about 90 miles south of Ensenada, Mexico. In answer to a question from another Technifacts reader, the **Tampico** has simply disappeared. I believe she grounded in 1956 or so. She was still intact and blocking the small bay when I visited her about six weeks after grounding. However, shortly afterward she was stripped by metal scavengers. Then she began to break up and disappeared within a year. The bow section was torn off, smashed higher onto the rocky shore and then dragged back into deeper water, where it disintegrated in the breakers.

For many years the bay, which was inundated by the cargo of diesel when the **Tampico** grounded, served as an environmental study site. When I visited the wreck a few days after the cargo spilled, oily sludge, dead and dying marine life, both flora and fauna, smeared the bottom of the bay and the shoreline. The polluted area was nearly untouched by human hands. The only clean up was by natural environmental action. Within two years, the area was again host to a great deal of marine life, including some new species and greater abundance of old life forms. Only two or three of the original species failed to return to the bay.

STORMS AND WRECKS

A few months ago I asked divers to take a look at their favorite wrecks and let me know what stormy weather had done to them. Kenneth Moffat had made two dives on the wreck of the **Aeolus**; one in July 1989 and another in June 1990. The wreck lies off the coast of North Carolina in about 110 feet of water. Kenneth advised, "I believe she is 260 feet long, but you should research the data for accurate information." Between his two dives Hurricane Hugo trashed the area. Kenneth continued, "On the July 1989 dive, the wreck was lying on her side with her decks perpendicular to the ocean bottom. Hugo reached down more than 100 feet...and wrenched the vessel back toward an upright position. The...vessel now rests at a 45 degree angle to the surface."

Wave forms operate in deep elliptical
(Continued on Page 108)

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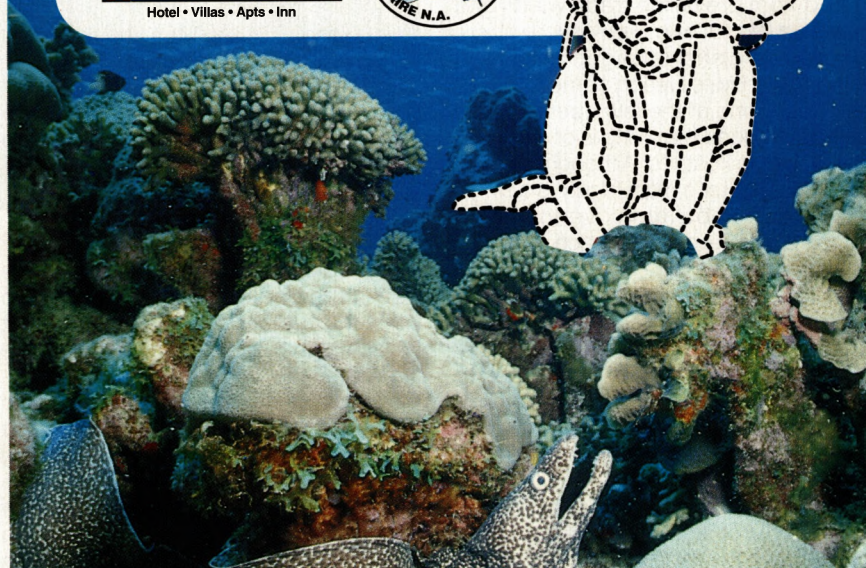
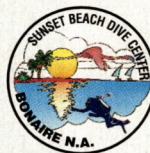
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Fish! All around us were schools of fish, more than several hundred by my count. Everything from fat Bermuda Chubs and Yellowtails to clusters of grunts, snappers and passing Horse-eye Jacks. No wonder this spot is called **Fish Reef**, one of the "fishiest" dive sites on Grand Cayman's west side.

Because it features a large, flattopped formation that rises 25 feet from the bottom and stops 35 feet from the surface, this site is also fittingly known as **La Mesa**, meaning table.

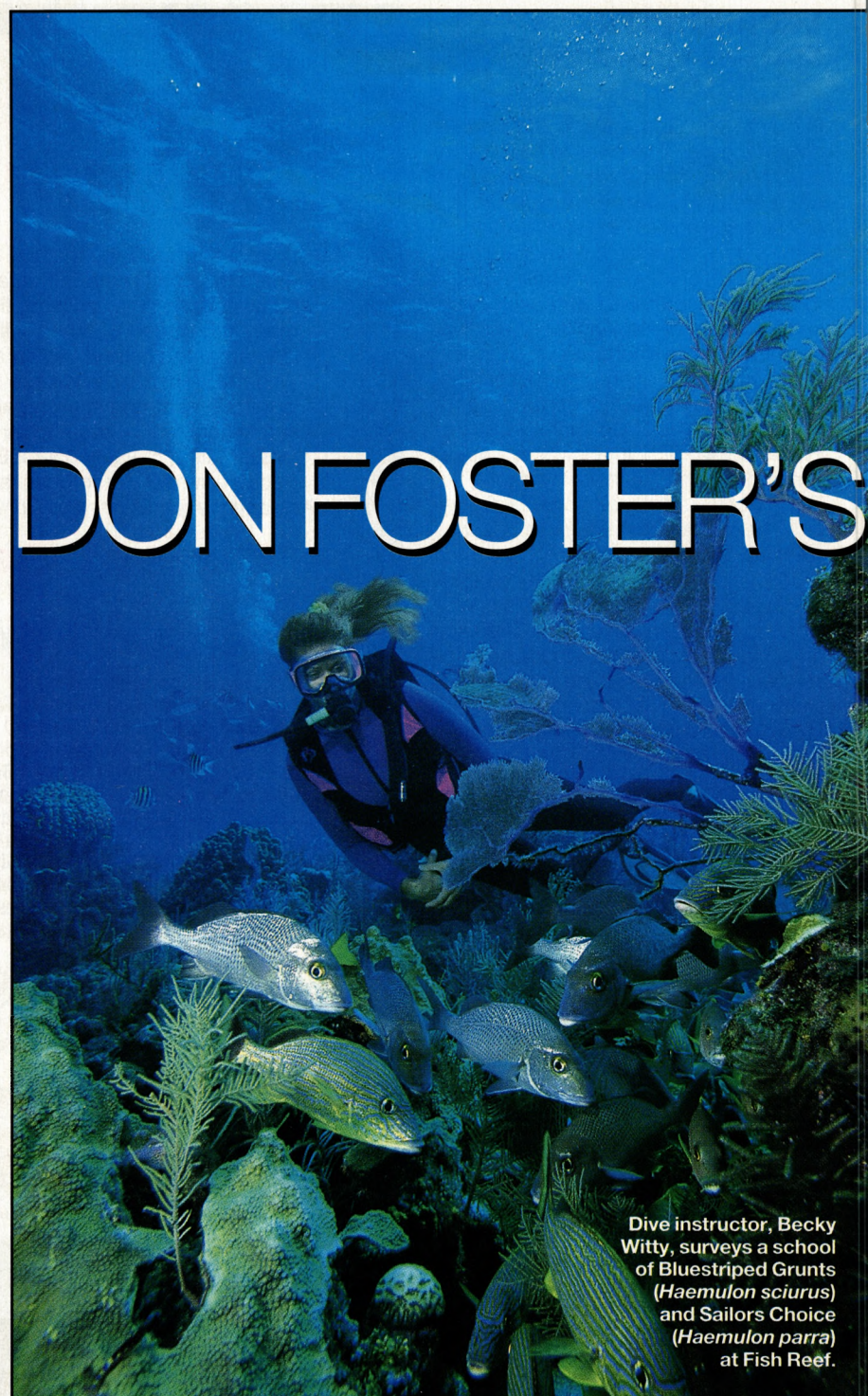
The Cayman Islands' reputation as an excellent vacation dive destination is certainly well deserved. How could it not be, with such a plenitude of sites (some 30 off the side alone)? The sites range from reefs that sport spurs and grooves forming deep valleys and tunnels, to drop-offs with incredible vertical plunges. And, no matter where you dive there's always plenty of marine life. It may be a pair of colorful Banded Coral Shrimp, a pair of passing Eagle Rays or a school of inquisitive Horse-eye Jacks. Add to that clear blue waters (visibility rarely falls short of 100 feet, even when it's windy) and it's no wonder travelers come from far away to visit.

As long as there is sport diving, divers will go to the Cayman Islands. Some go to get away from it all, while others go to get it all in. If you choose Seven Mile Beach to find the excitement, you've chosen well. If anything represents the flavor and zeal of a modern island it is Seven Mile Beach. With its wide assortment of hotels, condos, shopping areas, restaurants, nightclubs and watersport operations, all lining one of the most beautiful white sand beaches in the Caribbean, you can't go wrong.

Furthermore, Seven Mile Beach puts the diving right at your doorstep (on average, a 10 to 15 minute boat ride away). It also effectively places you on the leeward side of the island, which is generally protected from prevailing trade winds and thus is usually flat calm year-round.

When dive shops began to pop up along Seven Mile Beach some 11 to 12 years ago, one of the few operations to realize how good the diving is on the West Wall was Don Foster's. Although it's a big operation, Foster's main facility is a single story wooden building overlooking a prime tract of Seven Mile Beach. Having a beachhead advantage, Foster's is able to concentrate the bulk of its fleet, four large, custom flattops, to servicing the west side. Keeping things simple, it has only one satellite location, also beachfront, at the Radisson Hotel. A mere 200 yards down the beach, this second operation effectively augments the principal beach departure point.

The trio of 52 footers, *Cayman Star*, *Cayman Sun* and *Cayman Sea*, are the most active players. One of the nicest



Dive instructor, Becky Witty, surveys a school of Bluestriped Grunts (*Haemulon sciurus*) and Sailors Choice (*Haemulon parra*) at Fish Reef.

things about diving from flattops of this size is the copious deck space, even when the number of divers maxes out at 25 (although the boats seldom take more than 20). Should Foster's need to accommodate a big dive group, it will utilize the largest member of its West Wall fleet, *Skin Diver*. Sixty-five feet long, it is the King Kong of flattops and can easily handle 25 to 35 divers. Because of its size, *Skin Diver* will, on occasion, also function as an all around dive boat, visiting both North

and South Wall sites, in addition to the West Wall.

THE WEST WALL

Seven Mile Beach offers some of the most convenient diving imaginable. Don Foster's boats depart the headquarters at 9:30 each morning, make one or two beach pick-ups (at the Radisson and/or one of the condos). As a rule, check-in is 30 minutes before scheduled departure times. From the beach it's an easy 10 to



Left: Don Foster's beachside dive shop at the Radisson. Below: A Tiger Grouper patiently undergoes cleaning by gobies.



backdrop for a dive travel poster titled "Ski Cayman." The drop-off is laden with clusters of vibrant sponges, which are interlaced with thickets of Deepwater Gorgonians. It sustains a good aggregation of reef fish. Not far from Sand Chute is **Trinity Caves**, with several large, winding caves and alleyways to explore and a reef with ample collections of colorful sponges and small fish.

If two dives a day are not enough, Foster's also offers a choice between a single tank trip to a shallow west side reef or **Stingray City** at 2:45 pm.

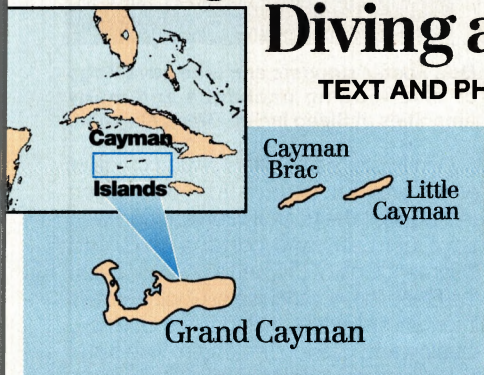
Night dives, every Monday and Thursday, are scheduled before sunset to allow for acclimation to the dark. Foster's is more than happy to arrange additional nights during the week for groups of six or more.

Among the more popular choices for a shallow dive, especially for a visiting diver's first time, is the **Oro Verde**. While the hulk of this 184 foot freighter is not much to look at, resting on the bottom at 60 feet it hosts a sizable aggregation of fish. Residents include Horse-eye Jacks, snappers and grunts as well as several dozen pugnacious Yellowtails, Bermuda Chubs and a few adult French and Gray Angels looking for hand-outs. If you're going try fish feeding, be careful. The voracious Yellowtails and chubs are known as "Cayman Piranhas!"

DIVE CAYMAN

Putting Grand Cayman's Great Diving at your Fin Tips

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS



The Radisson Resort on Seven Mile Beach offers every imaginable amenity.

THE NORTH WALL

When it comes to walls, few are as legendary as Grand Cayman's **North Wall**. The perilous drop starts around 55 to 60 feet and several of the vertical plummets feature series upon series of deep sand chutes, ravines and tunnels that exit on the open void. There is a lot to be said for cruising the edge of the wall in the hope that something interesting might rise from the depths or just for the sensation of hanging out on the edge of the blue.

Although the *Skin Diver* is sometimes brought around to dive the North Wall, Foster's principal boat for that duty is the Pro 42 jetboat, *Cayman Wall*. While it can carry 20 divers, this boat seldom leaves the dock with more than 16. Part of the morning two tank itinerary, *North Wall* will cover a choice of spots from **West Gate** all the way to **Andy's Wall**. Many of the sites in between include **Lemon Wall**, **Black Forest**, **Chinese Wall**, **Leslie's Curl** and **Tarpon Alley**. There's also **Gale's Mountain**, identified by a massive hill of coral rising 20 feet from the top of a wall and stopping 50 feet below the surface. The base is nearly encircled by a deep narrow ravine with several side channels leading off into a network of winding canyons and splits through the wall. Not far from it is **Grand Canyon**, a huge horseshoe that bisects a tall, 150

(Continued on next Page)



Beach pick-ups are effortless on Don Foster's 52 foot flattop, Cayman Sea.

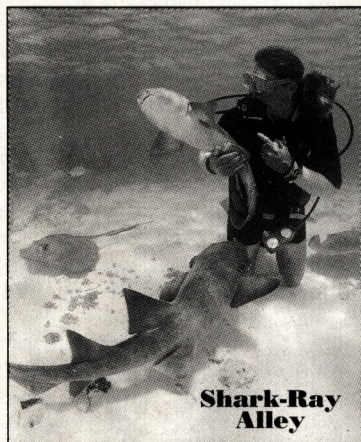
20 minute ride to a **West Wall** site, which will be followed by a second dive on a shallow reef.

Each time I have dived with Foster's its staff has exhibited a high level of enthusiasm, while both showing guests many of the reefs and critters, sharing jokes and passing time between dives. All dive profiles are determined by the captain and/or divemaster on board. However, buddy pairs using computers are sometimes granted a few extra minutes, provided

they follow Cayman Islands Watersports Operators Association safe diving rules, which includes no decompression diving and a maximum depth of 100 feet. Several of Don Foster's best West Side sites are **Orange Canyon**, **Big Tunnels**, Trinity Caves and Sand Chute.

As the name implies, **Sand Chute** is a large, white sand bottom canyon severing the edge of a cascading drop-off. The sand is so white, it has often been compared to snow. It was once used as a

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DON FOSTER'S DIVE CAYMAN

foot wide rampart of coral on the edge of a steep drop-off.

Of course, this intense underwater geography is only the half of it. **Eagle Ray Pass** is one of the more consistent producers for big fish. Named for its Eagle Rays, the spot features a series of deep, winding cuts and tunnels perforating the summit of the wall. The most notable characteristic is a large tunnel that begins at the base of a wide, sandy V-shaped basin, dropping 45 degrees clean through to the outside at a depth of 120 feet. The site is also frequented by groupers, Permit, Tarpon and African Pompano.

The area also has several excellent shallow sites such as **White Stroke Canyon** and **Andy's Reef**

THE SOUTH SIDE

On days when the weather is less than ideal for diving the North or West Wall, Foster's will go to the South Side, which offers excellent wall diving. This side of the island is not regularly visited. Starting slightly deeper on the average (60 to 70 feet) than those on the north side, the sites are dominated by deep fissures and ravines. Large pinnacles protrude from the edge of several walls. Favorites with Foster's include **Hole in the Wall**, **Ron's Wall** and **Palace Pinnacles**, which features three towers of coral that rise from the bottom edge of three large, separate sand chutes. Covering the 40 foot high vertical structure is an array of sponges and Deepwater Gorgonians.

If you're into exploring huge chasms and swim-throughs in shallow water, the South Side is the best place. However, the valleys here are 15 to 30 feet deep, bottoming out in the sand at depths of 45 to 50, even 60 feet in a few places. Adding to the stately profile, the upper ridge is fixed predominantly with stands of Elkhorn Corals. These shallow sites include **Red Bay Caves**, **Japanese Gardens**, **Oriental Gardens**, **Tin City** and **Spotts Caves**.

THE BEST OF THE CAYMANS

Having the ability to experience two islands makes dive travel all that much richer. When the good people at Don Foster's put together a one week, two island package, they were a little surprised by the response. Owing to its new found popularity, Foster's has decided to continue with the concept.

The Best of the Caymans one week package begins with a four night stay on Seven Mile Beach at your choice of either the Plantation Village Resort or the Radisson Hotel. On Grand Cayman, guests are treated to three morning trips

with Foster's, giving them a total of six dives. More dives can be added at the regular daily rate. Following this, guests are flown to Little Cayman via Island Air for a three night stay at Little Cayman Beach Resort. Here, guests are treated to six dives over a two day period (two tank morning, one tank afternoon trips). Meals and accommodations are also included. The package also covers all government taxes and service charges on accommodations, as well as service charges on all meals at Little Cayman Beach Resort. The only difference from the 1995 package is a slight rate increase. All in all, it's a pretty nifty little deal.



Don Foster's guests can take advantage of dive/lodging packages and many amenities at Sleep Inn on Grand Cayman.

Don Foster's also offers a wide range of additional dive vacation packages throughout the year, in conjunction with several hotels and condos on Grand Cayman. One of the better values is with the Sleep Inn, a franchise of Choice Hotels International, which includes the Comfort, Quality and Clarion Inn chain. The hotel has a large pool, heated spa and sundeck, complete with bar and grill overlooking the pool. As an added service to help its guests get the day started right, the Sleep Inn sets out a large pot of fresh brewed coffee, donuts and/or cinnamon/raisin bread from 6:30 to 8:00 am.

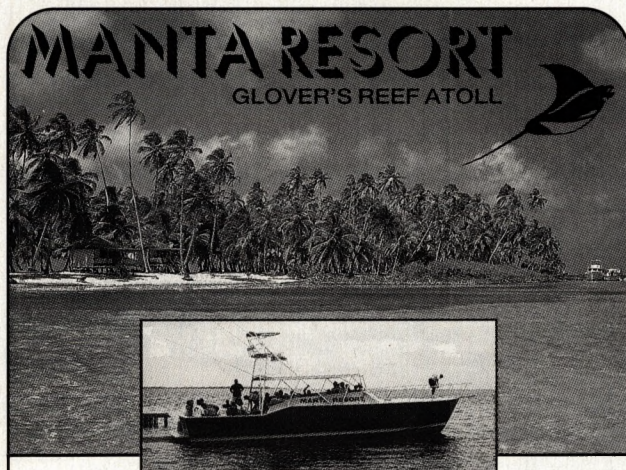
Several of the packages can also include a rental car. To make trip planning easy, Don Foster's U.S. reservations office in Dallas, Texas can arrange flights with either Grand Cayman's flag carrier,



Cayman Airways, out of Miami, Tampa, Atlanta and Houston, or one of several other international carriers that service the Cayman Islands. With enough advance notice, Fosters can book a private charter for groups opting to fly through Dallas. For more information contact Don Foster's reservations office at (800) 83-DIVER or (214) 722-2535; (214) 722-6511 (fax).

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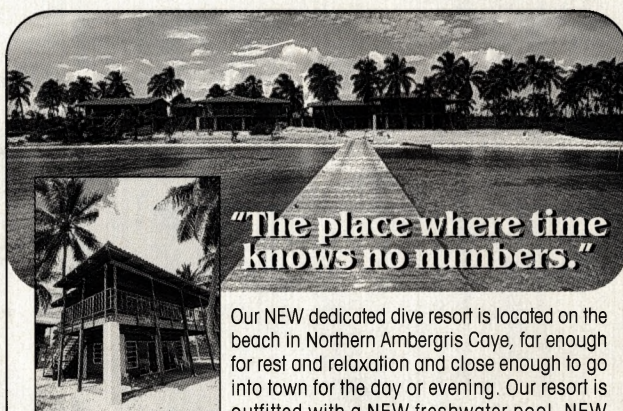
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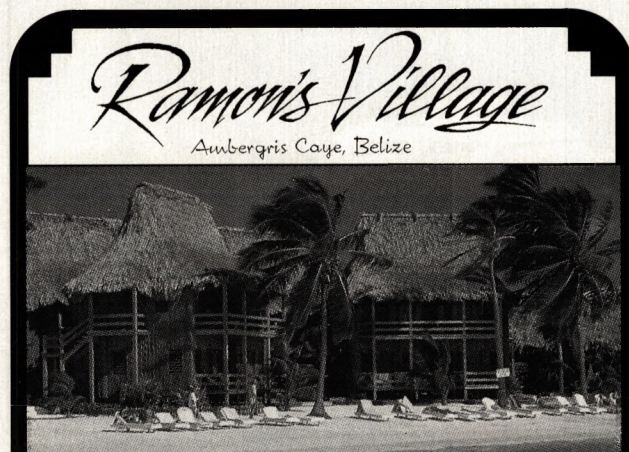
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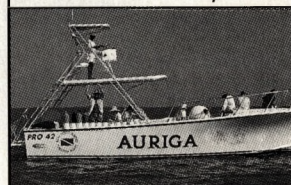


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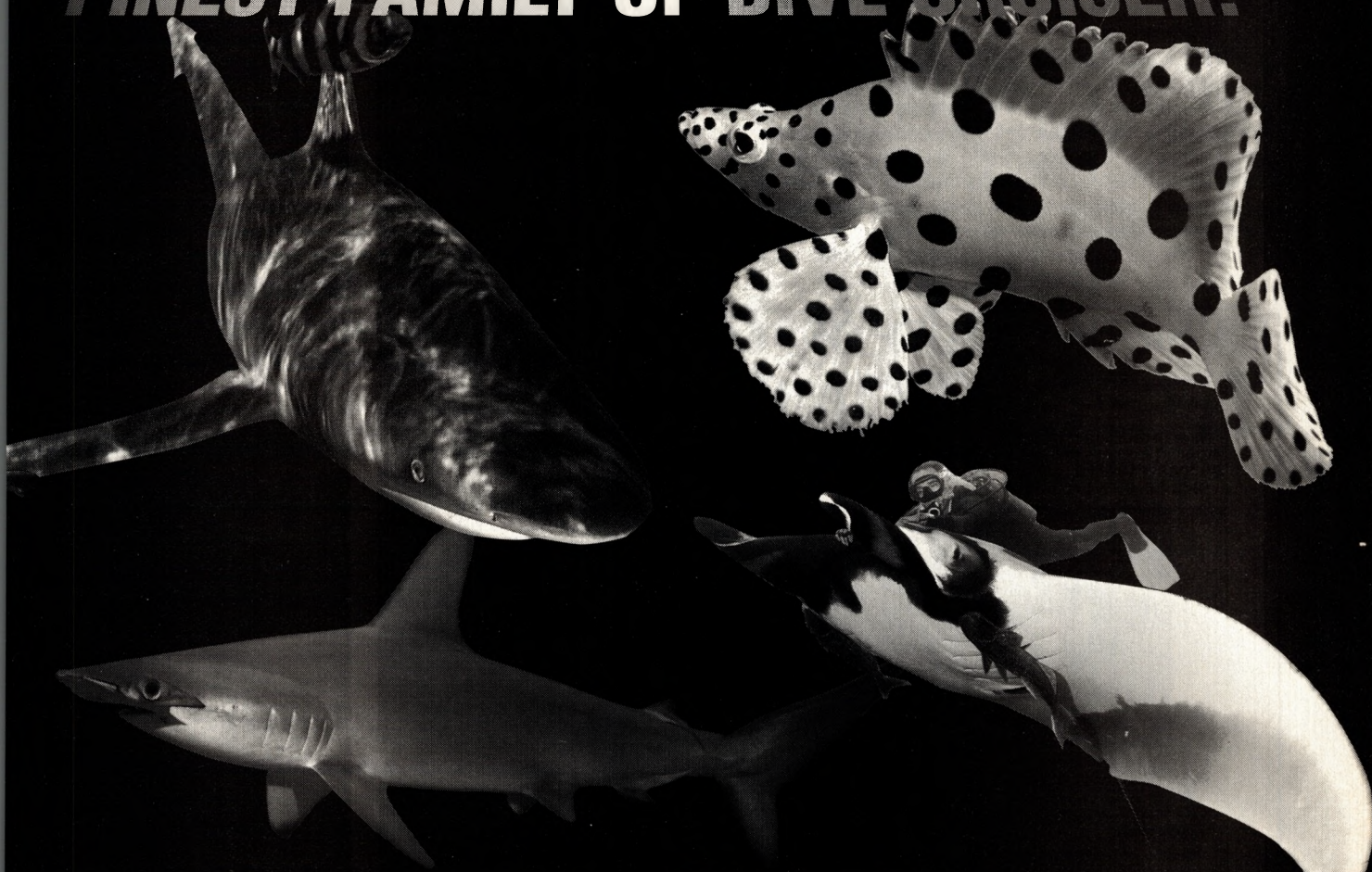
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CATHY CHURCH SUPER COURSE

(Continued from Page 9)

the water in a systematic approach to ensure everyone realizes his/her best potential. In logical fashion she covers ambient light, flash fill, close-up, wide angle, multiple strobes and, of course, buoyancy and balance underwater with a camera. In addition to students using Nikonos cameras I thru V, Cathy also teaches those with the Nikonos RS, Sea & Sea systems and housed cameras.

The service is incredible—your scuba

gear is carried to and from the boat for you. During the daily three hour dive you simply swim to the stern of the boat, where a dry photo instructor will change film, lens or batteries while two other instructors change your tank and offer you marvelous snacks of fruit, candy, cookies and soft drinks. Cathy and another instructor are in the water with the group, helping with camera settings, critters, posing or whatever is needed.

On close-up day Herb brings his tame angelfish right into your Close-up Outfit framer for a stunning portrait. On the grotto dive, Cathy takes you to the

very same light beam that is the topic of her signature print "Devil's Grotto." On the wall dive they will help you with many subjects that Cathy herself has immortalized.

And, at just the right moment, in between all the serious stuff, you'll find yourself enjoying a laugh. Don't worry if Herb sets you up with some strange creatures for your class portrait or if you're caught napping on the boat after a long dive. It all comes out in the fun on graduation night, following a beautiful student slide show. Cathy balances the emphasis on learning more and getting great photos with having a wonderful vacation.

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There are plenty of reasons for taking a Cathy Church course but the most obvious is that it is the fastest and easiest way to become a good underwater photographer. You can learn from Cathy's 30 years of experience and avoid much of the frustration and expense of trial and error learning.

The biggest reason for Cathy's high repeat rate is this style of diving allows photographers an unprecedented freedom to spend literally hours contemplating their pictures without the worry of rushing back to the boat. With no limit on the number of tanks you can use, even fast breathers get plenty of bottom time.

MULTI-LEVEL TRAINING

Amazing as it may sound, the courses are designed for any level of interest, you need only be a certified diver. Time is devoted to each group: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Each person sets his/her own goals. A beginner may be happy just bringing the camera back without losing it; the advanced photographer will want to take the finest photo ever seen! Each level is respected and encouraged. There are no demands on the students except that they have a good time.

Each day starts with critiques and equipment set up. At 10:00 am the Sunset Divers' boat leaves right from the nearby slipway for a short trip to the dive site. Divers step into the water, their cameras are handed to them and they drop to the reef below—no long swims, strong currents or wild surge, just quiet, warm water and few distractions to disturb the creative process.

After a long dive, a short boat ride and a good lunch, the afternoon lecture and slide show cover the topics for the next day of diving. The schedule includes two free afternoons, a night dive, two wall dives and, of course, **Stingray City**.

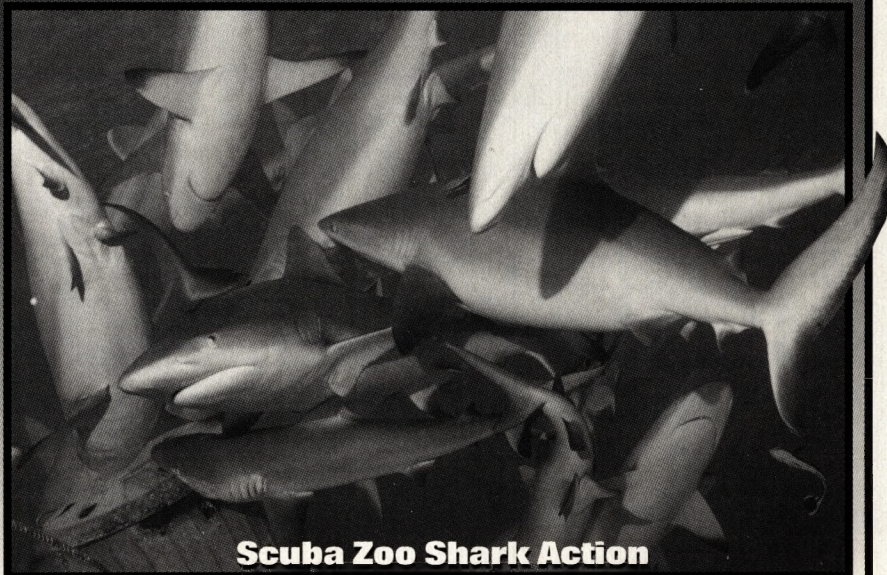
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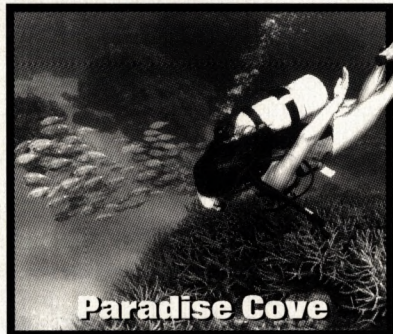
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CATHY CHURCH SUPER COURSE

Herb can escort you to exotic destinations in the South Pacific, too. They do all the planning and keep you smiling as well. You can join them in the Solomon Islands on the *Billikiki* April 2 to 13, 1996. Don't worry if you can't make this trip, these trips have been so successful more have already been scheduled for 1997. There are also Fiji trips on the *Matagi Princess* from April 11 to 25 and April 20 to May 2. Cathy and Herb also have two Truk trips and two Palau trips from mid October through mid November 1996.

Cathy and Herb enjoy traveling with people who are fun to be with, so all friendly people, photographers and non-photographers, are welcome to join them.

Cathy helps everyone during her trips with everything from emergency repairs to exposure questions. Underwater, she will even put her own camera aside to make sure everyone gets a good opportunity to see and photograph any special creatures found. On the *Billikiki* tours she gives a free five day photo course that includes daily lectures, critiques and help in the water. Herb manages all the travel arrangements, baggage and, of course, the social calendar. Herb and Cathy think nothing of taking the entire group out for dinner and drinks. They do lots of the little things that make a trip special, such as giving T-shirts to the guests and the crew, bringing party favors for birthdays and sending out group photos after the trip. No one makes being a tour leader such a complete profession.

HOW TO GET THERE

As for traveling to Grand Cayman, this charming resort Mecca offers incredibly easy access from the U.S. A number of well known airlines offer nonstop flights to Grand Cayman from such U.S. gateway cities as Miami, Tampa, Orlando, Atlanta and Houston. For more information about specific flights and seat availability call Cayman Airways at (800) 422-9626.

For more information about this year's photo courses, contact Cathy Church, Sunset Underwater Photo Centre, P.O. Box 479, Grand Cayman, BWI or call (809) 949-7415 or (809) 949-9770 (fax). 🐟

RECREATIONAL REBREATHERS

(Continued from Page 17)

The rebreather course takes three to four days, which includes classroom lectures, slide presentations, a swimming pool introduction and finally, open water training sessions on a coral reef. Training

classes are kept to small groups of two to six students, ensuring personalized attention. The full course runs about \$300 to \$500, including boat trips.

My instructor was Rob Palmer, an affable Brit who is one the key architects of TDI programs and the co-author of the Semi-Closed Circuit Rebreather course. As a book author, lecturer and underwater cave explorer, Rob brings an enormous amount of knowledge and experience to the classroom. He is an instructor's instructor. And, we quickly learned the dos and don'ts of rebreather diving.

The first thing you learn is that nitrox was designed as a breathing gas for shallow water diving. Its safe diving limits are the same as recreation scuba—from the surface to 115 feet. In fact, its greatest benefits are achieved at 30 to 60 feet.

The next thing you learn is that nitrox is a very flexible breathing gas, with various oxygen/nitrogen mixtures for specific depth ranges. The Atlantis I rebreather can be set up to use four different mixtures: 32, 40, 50 or 60 percent oxygen. For example, you would use a 32 percent oxygen mix for a wall dive to 100 feet; a 40 percent mix if you were making a coral reef dive to 60 feet.

You also discover that nitrox is a very safe breathing gas—as long as you don't exceed the prescribed depth limits. The lesser percentage of nitrogen means less chance of getting bent. If you wish to be extra, extra safe, you dive nitrox while using air tables or a computer designed for use with compressed air.

Perhaps the most important point you learn is that today's rebreather training courses are product specific. Rebreather designs are so radically different that you must be trained to operate the specific make and model you intend to use. Unlike recreational scuba, there is no standardization of products or components.

Much of the course is devoted to the disassembly, reassembly, maintenance, filling and systems check of the Atlantis I. You discover a whole new list of buzz words, such as scrubber, channeling, counterlung, bailout cylinder and gas dwell time.

HOW IT FEELS

Your first few dives with a rebreather are almost indescribable. It feels weird and wonderful—all at the same time. One thing is certain, rebreather diving feels entirely different than recreational scuba. It's like night and day.

The very first thing you notice is the utter silence around you. The familiar rumble of air bubbles is completely gone. There is almost a hush over the coral reef and you become aware of your breathing. You feel as if you are in a closet or small space—with only the sound of your

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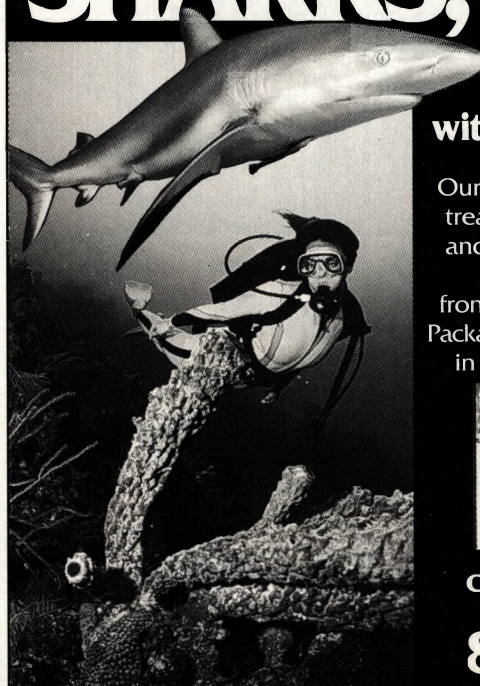


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RECREATIONAL REBREATHERS

breathing to keep you company.

The next conscious thought is that you're invisible. The fish don't seem to care that you are on their reef. Nothing runs away from you. Ordinarily timid fish swim right up to your facemask. You start thinking, "Wow, this is going to be great for underwater photography!" Even when the rebreather vents a small trickle of bubbles, it sounds entirely different (and less noisy) than scuba.

As you become more accustomed to the rebreather, you discover the Atlantis I is no more cumbersome than a standard scuba tank. In fact, it feels better balanced and seems to create less drag than conventional scuba.

There is no noticeable change in buoyancy as you inhale or exhale, primarily because the volume of breathing gas is passing back and forth between your lungs and the breathing bag. As mentioned earlier, it feels weird, but wonderful.

There are, of course, some noticeable differences between open circuit scuba and a rebreather. You must descend slowly to allow the breathing bag to inflate fully. It only takes a few seconds, since there is a second stage demand valve inside the breathing bag.

The same is true during ascent. You go slowly to allow the rebreather time to vent gas from the expanding breathing bag. The basic laws of diving physics play a more noticeable roll in rebreather diving.

The underwater maneuver that requires the most diver control is rolling over on your back so you are facing up. You have to get good firm grip on your mouthpiece before trying it. The pressure differential between the position of your lungs and the much lower position of the breathing bag causes a slight overpressure at the mouthpiece. It feels as if someone has stuck a bicycle tire pump in your mouth.

Much of the open training revolves around learning to switch from the rebreather mouthpiece to the backup scuba system, clearing water that might be trapped in the bellows of the dual breathing hoses, shutting off the dual hose mouthpiece upon surfacing and other basic safety maneuvers.

Toward the end the dive you become aware of another welcomed benefit—no drymouth. The breathing gas is much more moist than compressed air because it is constantly being "wetted" by condensation on the interior walls of the breathing bag and hoses.

Still another revelation comes to the forefront of your consciousness—there

is less "chill down" of the body's core temperature on the second or third dive of the day. The chemical reaction between the carbon dioxide absorbent (scrubber) and the recirculating breathing gas works like a miniature underwater heater. The net result is that the gas you are breathing is both moist and warm.

WHO WILL BUY ONE?

Dräger's new recreational rebreather offers numerous advantages over open circuit scuba. We have mentioned just a few but the most obvious are long duration dives at shallow depths or multiple dives before a fill is required. But at a retail cost of \$6,250, you should have a pretty good reason to purchase one. This not a toy, nor are rebreathers for everyone.

Perhaps the most likely customers for rebreathers will be serious underwater photographers, who will spend any amount of money to get the rarest of photos. The stealth capability of the Atlantis I is

ATLANTIS I INFORMATION

For more information about the Atlantis I rebreather or enrollment in a Nitrox Rebreather training course, contact:

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ideal for stalking the most timid of marine creatures or most fearful of fish. Compared to the cost of underwater photo or video gear, the cost of a rebreather is about the same as Nikonos RS camera.

Other customer candidates for nitrox rebreathers might include serious fish-watchers, treasure divers, marine biologists, fish behavioral experts, underwater archaeologists, treasure divers and others who want to make long dives in shallow water.

Regardless of whether you have a compelling need to own a recreational rebreather or not, you should give it a try. The rebreather training course is a real kick and the education is well worth the price. 🐟

CITIZEN INTRODUCES NEW AQUALAND WATCH

The Citizen Watch Company of America, Inc., has recently introduced the Aqualand Duplex. Like all Aqualand dive watches, it incorporates a built-in depth sensor with a state of the art diving watch.

The Duplex also features two digital display windows, so divers can review current depth and elapsed dive time simultaneously.

Push buttons recall maximum depth



and water temperature. The Aqualand Duplex also features a dive log memory that can recall the maximum depth,

dive time and date of the last four dives. As with the other Aqualand timepieces, the Duplex features a rapid ascent alarm, depth alarm and dive time. This timepiece also features an automatic calendar to the year 2099 and a lithium battery.

There are four Aqualand Duplex models, including one with a stainless steel bracelet. The Duplex is water resistant to 600 feet and features a depth display to 260 feet. Retailing from \$475 to \$595 for the bracelet model, the Aqualand Duplex is being nationally advertised in SKIN DIVER Magazine. 🐟

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Nekton Pilot

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHIRLEY VANDERBILT

Each of the more than 700 islands and 2,500 cays of The Bahamas has its own distinct form and features, creating a diverse tropical paradise of clear, turquoise waters, sparkling white sand beaches and dramatic underwater gardens and walls. Making the most of this diversity, Nekton Diving Cruises has established three uniquely exciting and different itineraries aboard its revolutionary live-aboard, the *Nekton Pilot*. Since her maiden voyage in 1994, the *Nekton Pilot* has been traveling the areas of Grand Bahama, Bimini and remote Cay Sal Bank. But now this intriguing SWATH vessel is also spending the winter, from November to May, in the southern Bahamas, departing the quaint village of George Town, on Great Exuma, for

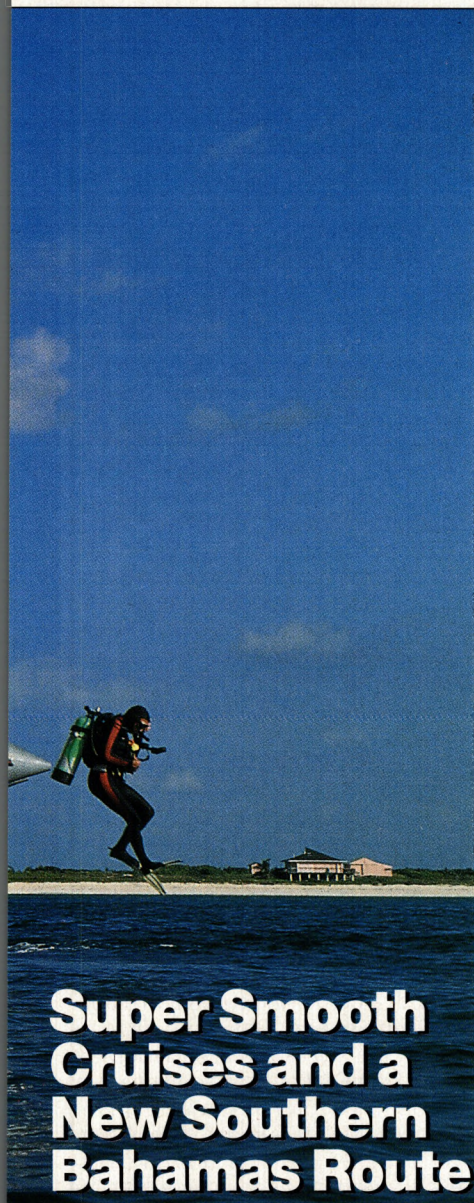
weekly excursions to San Salvador, Rum Cay and Conception Island.

The southern Bahama Islands are quite simply a visual feast. Quiet and serene, they offer a pristine view of nature with a little history and island character thrown in here and there. Great Exuma's population exists in a few small settlements, with roots in the past of British Loyalist settlers and African slaves. San Salvador is said to be the first landing site of Columbus in the New World but, more importantly to divers, San Sal's main feature is the dramatic walls plunging to 13,000 feet just off-shore. Rum Cay's topside terrain features caves with pre-Columbian drawings, while underwater caves along the wall are filled with enormous sponges

and ancient coral growths. A large portion of the Exumas has been designated as the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park, providing protection for large iguanas, ospreys and terns, Hawksbill Turtles, sharks, rays and myriad other land and sea creatures. The southern Bahamas has it all—the full beauty of nature, the uncomplicated lifestyle of the islands and some of the best diving in the Caribbean.

THE DIVING

High drama is present throughout the southern Bahama waters, whether in the physical ruggedness of plunging walls or the sudden appearance of powerful sea creatures. Such was the case on our dive at **Stew Pot**, off San Salvador. Diving with *Nekton Pilot* owner Lynn Dixon as



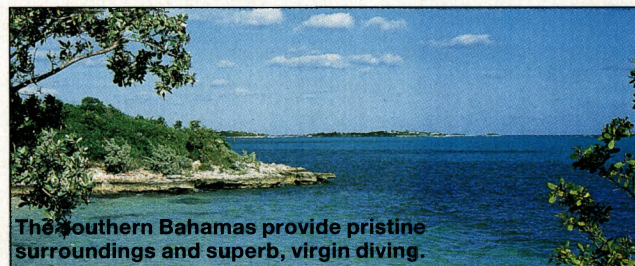
Super Smooth Cruises and a New Southern Bahamas Route



Above: Between dives guests may relax and offgas on the 2,000 square foot sundeck, complete with spa. Right: Meals are the tantalizing creations of chef Wade Hughes.



Above: Lynn Dixon, a *Nekton Pilot* owner, explores a ledge at Conception Island. Left: Stern view of the unique SWATH superstructure of the ultra-stable live-aboard, *Nekton Pilot*.



The Southern Bahamas provide pristine surroundings and superb, virgin diving.



my model, I had been preoccupied with the sponges on the ledge rather than the deep blue of the drop-off. Lynn suddenly directed my attention toward a large Scalloped Hammerhead Shark cruising along the wall. We later found out that Scalloped Hammerheads are very common in this area. At this same site we played with a juvenile Hawksbill Turtle, came face to face with friendly Nassau Groupers and circled the schools of Horse-eye Jacks and Yellowtail Snappers congregating under the boat.

Throughout the week, we found the walls and reefs to be heavily populated with Nassau Groupers, although varieties of tropicals were somewhat limited. But, what the southern Bahamas lacks in dense fish population is more than made up for by the beauty of the corals and sponges along the steep walls. To add to the adventure, several areas have extensive swim-throughs, tunnels and caverns. **Rum Cay Wall Caves** features numerous openings through the reef to the wall, some interconnecting and spilling out to open alleyways. Everyone's favorite at San Salvador seems to

be **Labyrinth**, a beautiful wall dive that fully lives up to its name. Entering a swim-through at 110 feet along the wall, we followed the meandering opening right and then left, then encountered several caverns branching off. The wall is riddled with many of these types of formations and heavily adorned with enormous Orange Elephant Ear Sponges, twisting Wire Corals, large bushes of Black Coral and brilliantly colored tube sponges. At San Sal, we also sampled the pinnacles of **Devil's Claw** and had fun exploring the ravines

and sand chutes of **Mt. Rushmore**.

Uninhabited Conception Island offered the deepest and most startling drop-offs, with the tops of huge coral mounds beginning at depths of 70 feet and spilling over to the steeply angled sand chutes. The pristine quality of these walls is astounding, with massive growths of corals and sponges. At Conception we also did some topside exploring, entering a mangrove lined wa-

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NEKTON PILOT

terway much as the Lucayan Indians must have done, in search of birds and sea creatures. This is an excellent kayaking and snorkeling site. Our final site, **Grandmother's Garden**, is being groomed by the crew as a shark dive area. Already their efforts have attracted reef sharks and Hammerheads. All of the sites on the *Nekton Pilot* itinerary have been fitted with specially designed permanent moorings to protect the reefs and secure the boat.

In addition to the southern Bahamas, *Nekton Pilot's* itinerary to Cay Sal Bank features shark diving, incredible walls, intriguing blue holes and shallow caverns. The Bahama Adventure to Bimini and Grand Bahama includes several interesting wrecks and walls and areas with tremendous populations of marine life, such as **Gingerbread Grounds** and **Orange Cay**. From May to November, these trips depart Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The *Nekton Pilot* has revolutionized the way we look at dive boats. Designed by partner/captains John Dixon and Peter Herman, the vessel looks much like a box balanced on two 78 foot long, water ballasted pontoons. The boat's unique configuration is what makes it so very appropriate as a dive boat, providing both a comfortable ride and extensive living space. Based on designs used by the Navy for its SWATH vessels, the *Nekton Pilot* has twin engines, fuel and up to 70 tons of seawater in the pontoons. Motion is kept to a minimum, even in heavy seas, because the vessel's support is underwater, where it's calm, rather than on the surface. To make diving more comfortable and accessible, a hydraulically operated dive platform raises and lowers to place exit ladders right at waterlevel. Nearly the entire length of the 78 foot boat is converted to usable passenger space, allowing for spacious cruise ship style cabins and lounging areas, including a 2,000 square foot sundeck.

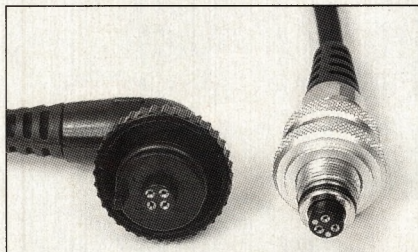
For many, live-aboard diving is considered the best way to spend a dive vacation. The boats have access to the most pristine sites, away from heavily populated areas, and divers have the convenience of the dive site right at their doorstep. The clear air of the open sea, the sunrises and sunsets, the beauty of the water and the islands all come together to create a soothing environment that relaxes the body and inspires the soul. However, for some divers this image may be marred by the fear of seasickness

(Continued on Page 113)

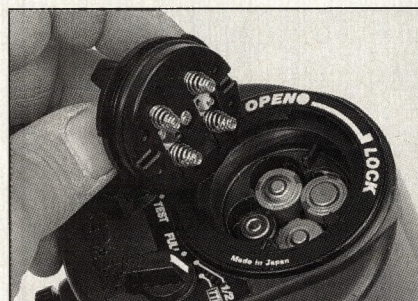
SEA & SEA YS-120 DUO

(Continued from Page 10)

lines and five seconds with lithium batteries. At full power you should be able to make three dives with rechargeables, six dives with alkalines and more than a dozen dives with lithiums. Using TTL can increase the strobe's battery life to two or three times that of full manual. If you are a macro shooter, you may have to change



Above: Connectors are available for a variety of cameras. Below: The battery compartment door is O-ring sealed.



batteries only once during a dive trip. A Sea & Sea charger and eight nickel-cadmium batteries can be purchased as an accessory (for 120/240 volt currents).

SEA & SEA YS-120 DUO COMPONENTS

YS-120 Duo Strobe	
with sync cord	\$782.95
Extra sync cord	\$101.00
Eight nickel-cadmium batteries and charger	\$152.00

The YS-120 batteries are in an O-ring sealed compartment. The markings confirming battery orientation are very clear. Sea & Sea's unique battery locking door ensures a very positive seal.

The YS-120 Duo's high impact thermopolymer construction provides a 200 foot depth rating yet the strobe weighs less than 26 ounces. Sea & Sea's II, III, IV and new Sea Arm V flash arms can be connected to the base of the YS-120, providing a variety of extensions. If you want to use two strobes, Sea & Sea also offers a dual flash connector for Nikons,

(Continued on Page 71)

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SKIN DIVER MARCH 1996 59

Luxury Resort Offers Diving Off Roatan's North & South Coasts

Fantasy Island

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICK FREHSEE

I can recall, with a certain clarity, the opening of Roatan's Fantasy Island Beach Resort in 1989. At that very moment a new era of ambiance and hospitality came to the Bay Islands of Honduras. If the standards for a luxury resort include fully air-conditioned interiors, guestrooms of exceptional appointment, complete diving and watersports, tennis courts and pool, then Fantasy Island continues to be in a class by itself. Add to that unlimited shore diving and a fleet of mid-sized dive boats, two of which are normally stationed at the resort's second dock on the opposite shore, and you have a truly unique dive resort. In fact, Fantasy Island's north side dock operation, reached via the resort's private road (only four minutes' drive to the north dock from the main resort), provides Roatan's only regularly scheduled bi-coastal dive experiences. This and all of the other services and amenities offered by Fantasy Island are available in several competitive and affordable packages.

Roatan, 30 miles long and only one and a half to three miles wide, is the largest and most populated Bay Island. Its long southern and northern coasts have developed a nearly continuous fringing reef that stretches the length of the island. The reefs of both coasts are

narrow and close-hugging formations, often with coral crests beginning just below the surface and drop-offs, often with vertical walls, beginning in only 20 to 40 feet of water. Both coasts exemplify maximum species diversity in sponges and corals, which encapsulate huge spires and canyons of an exaggerated spur and groove system.

However, there are differences between the two coastal formations as well. The south side faces the trade winds. The reef formations are usually very close to shore, allowing easy beach dives in some areas. The southern reef line is demarcated by a string of offshore islets and is occasionally interrupted by

The dive gazebo, on the east side of the resort, provides excellent access to the drop-off for day or night shore dives.

entrances to bays. The north coast is the leeward side, protected from the trade winds but exposed to the one-half dozen or so "northers" (low pressure cold fronts) that arrive from November through February. The northern reefline is slightly farther from shore and broken occasionally by bights—entrances through the reef into the lagoon. In many places, there is considerable difference between the northern and southern wall. Often, one side has less wind than the other. The trade winds can, at times,





A breathtaking aerial view of Fantasy Island Beach Resort. Right: A diver hovers over an exquisite stand of Elkhorn Coral (*Acropora palmata*).



Above: The *Little Dan* is one of six 44 foot island-built custom dive boats. Below: A relaxing, tropical and luxurious guestroom.



blow rather fiercely. During a norther, the north coast can become, at the least, rough and at the most, downright scary, even to very ocean-experienced divers. Fantasy Island set out to provide the maximum dive diversity and flexibility by gaining access to both coasts.

Just east of the resort, on the main island, is the private road that runs less than a mile to the north coast dive dock and lagoon. Normally, two of the six 44 foot island-built custom dive boats are docked on the north coast (*Little Kem*,

Little Dev, *Little Tavito*, *Little Dan*, *Little Kashi*, *Little Ramsey*). Guests are transferred, along with tanks and dive gear, from the resort to the north dock via resort van and truck. During a normal weather week four to six days of diving the south coast and at least two dives along the north coast are planned. Hank Hynds, Fantasy Islands' dive operations manager and one of Roatan's most experienced bi-coastal instructors (17 years), has planned the itinerary that is making divers very happy. This north/

south coast experience, along with day and night shore dives launched from Fantasy Island's handsome and practical dive gazebo, delivers a diverse and complete Roatan dive experience.

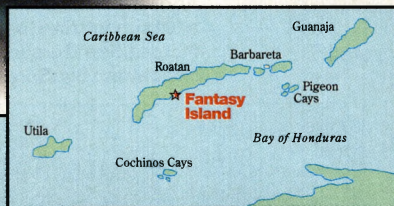
Fantasy Island does not look like the same resort that opened in 1989. Six and a half years ago the main building, dive shop and marina were in position but changes and additions have been made since. Today, palms, pines, flower trees and foliage nearly obscure large portions of the resort. The self-contained

resort "town" and beach occupy a 17 acre private island attached to Roatan by a wooden bridge. A distinctive feature is a nearly one-quarter mile long crescent-shaped white sand beach forming the outer shoreline. Hidden by pines and palms is the L-shaped main building, which houses luxury guestrooms on two floors. On the lower floor is the hotel entrance, reception desk, travel desk and spacious lobby. On the second floor is the handsome and stylish restaurant, bar and disco. (Manuel, the always smiling night bar manager, has been with Fantasy Island since its opening.) Across from the lobby/restaurant is a game room and a complete conference center on the second floor. To the west,

back from the beach are a series of standard rooms (balcony facing the beach) termed the divers' wing, as they are next to the dive shop. Up a hill behind the dive shop is the hillside guestwing. Fantasy Island's beautiful guestrooms are all handsomely furnished with full bath, air-conditioning, satellite TV, touch tone phones, refrigerator and private balcony. The dive shop is a large complex with gear, compressors, storage, etc., facing the docks. It's less than a dozen steps from sign-up boards to wash bins and wet storage and another dozen steps to board a boat.

On the beach side of the resort is a freshwater pool, children's play center, picnic tables, beach chairs, watersports complex, beach pavilion bar and, at the

(Continued on Page 119)



Key Largo's

Sea Dwellers Dive Center

The Fun Starts Here!

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BILL HARRIGAN

Two minutes after you walk in the door at the Sea Dwellers Dive Center you know you're going to have fun. Of course, you expect good diving in Key Largo, one of the most popular dive destinations in the world. And, since Sea Dwellers is a PADI Five Star Facility, you assume the shop and boat will be first class. But, it's the Sea Dwellers brand of service that guarantees fun diving and you'll feel it right away. Sea Dwellers' staff members provide the kind of personal attention that makes you feel as if they were waiting just for you.

The energy and enthusiasm of Rob Haff and Jeff Cleary, the owners of Sea Dwellers, is the key to the upbeat atmosphere. Rob and Jeff believe that treating people right is the way to make sure they have fun. That attitude is reflected in everyone on the Sea Dwellers staff.

Centrally located at Mile Marker 100 in Key Largo, the Sea Dwellers shop carries an extensive selection of dive gear and clothing. Office manager Jackie Logan can help you choose from the large variety of brand names available. Michelle O'Brien might also be in the store to help you pick out a dive mask but don't be surprised to find her checking your air on the boat later because she is also a divemaster.

Sea Dwellers is a great place to get certified or take advanced training. One of the reasons is the experienced PADI instructors, such as Scott Rodman and Mitch Cockman, who make learning as enjoyable as diving. Another is the flexibility Sea Dwellers offers. Dive courses can be started at any time to accommodate your schedule. Sea Dwellers emphasizes personal attention in instruc-



Above: Sea Dwellers in Key Largo is a full service dive facility. Below: The 50 foot Sea Dweller III. Right: The Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort's pool.



tion, too, so the classes are kept small. Sea Dwellers offers courses from Discover Scuba to divemaster, including a large selection of specialties. Open water certification at Sea Dwellers takes four or five days to complete and includes 10 open water dives with all

equipment. That's a super deal for learning to dive on your vacation!

HOLIDAY INN SUNSPREE RESORT

The Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort is Sea Dwellers' Key Largo accommodations partner. Constant upgrades have made this resort one of the most inviting in the Keys. Directly across from Sea Dwellers, the Holiday Inn also features Bogie's Cafe, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Humphrey Bogart's boat from the movie *African Queen* is also on display at the dock. Two pools set amid fragrant tropical plants are available



for guests and are used for Sea Dwellers dive instruction.

The Holiday Inn offers several excellent Sea Dwellers dive packages. One of the most popular includes two half day, two tank dive trips. You also get a free continental breakfast at Bogie's Cafe and free

passes on the Holiday Casino Cruise. To minimize handling your dive gear during your stay, you can turn it over to Sea Dwellers and they will rinse, store and set it up for you each day. If you elect to hang on to your gear, you'll like the convenient parking, which is close to both your room and the dive boat.

SEA DWELLER III

Sea Dweller III is a big, clean boat set up for comfort and safety. Captained by either Rob or Jeff, its twin diesels provide a 22 knots cruising speed that gets you to most dive sites in about 30 minutes. Although it will carry more passengers, Sea Dwellers limits the load to a maximum of 28 divers so there is plenty



Whether you are in Sea Dwellers' fully stocked dive shop or out on the Keys' reefs, personal attention is guaranteed.

of room to move around and lots of space to stow your gear. In addition to the large dive platform with two beefy ladders, there are two special benches near the stern called the action seats. These give you a safe and convenient place to sit while you pull on your fins—eliminating the balancing act you have to do on some boats. There is a freshwater shower on the stern so you can rinse off immediately after you exit the water.

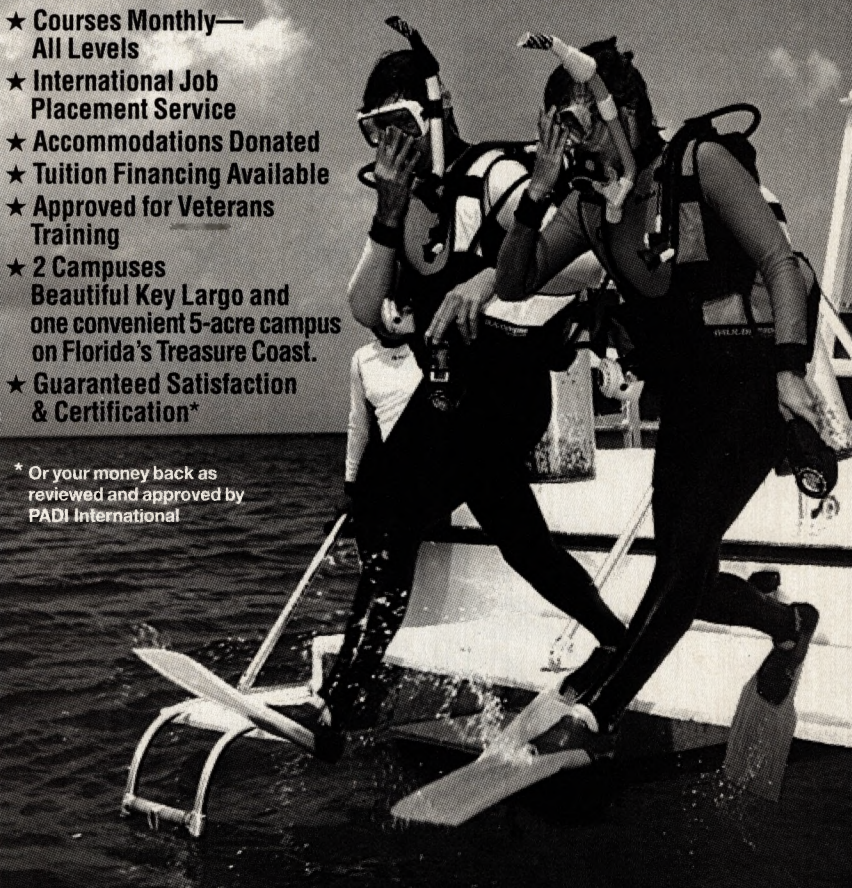
PARK AND SANCTUARY

The protection provided by the combination of Pennekamp Park and the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary helps ensure good diving with Sea Dwellers year after year. The easy access, warm water and beautiful coral reefs attract many divers but it's the amazing fish life that really sets Key Largo apart as a dive destination. In Key Largo, you can ease your way into a silver cloud of Horse-eye Jacks or get nose to nose with a legion of Bluestriped Grunts. You can follow a pack of Blue Tangs around the reef with a snorkel or watch thousands of Glass Minnows swirl in a ball to confuse predators. When the Bar Jacks are feeding on zooplankton they can surround you in numbers thick enough to blot out the bot-

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tom. If you move slowly and carefully, the fish in Key Largo will accept you in their midst—one of the best experiences a diver can have.

SEA DWELLERS REEF DIVING

Molasses Reef is everyone's favorite in Key Largo. In addition to its clear water and coral covered spurs, Molasses always has a gift for you, no matter how many times you visit it. On one dive it

may be a flight of four or five Spotted Eagle Rays or an inquisitive pair of silver Snook. On the next you may encounter schools of 20 or 30 fast swimming Permit or a dozen Barracuda hanging motionless like arrows. Green Sea Turtles, Nurse Sharks and Green Moray Eels are usually present somewhere on the reef and your chances of seeing them are always good. I have even seen a lone Great Hammerhead Shark, magnificent with its high dorsal fin and entourage of Pilotfish, cruising the reef on several occasions.

According to scientists, in the Key Largo

National Marine Sanctuary *Montastrea annularis*, commonly called Boulder Star Coral, grows about one centimeter in diameter per year. If you measure the size of many of the Star Coral colonies on **French Reef** and make your calculations based on that rate of growth, you'll find these corals are about 300 years old. In those three centuries, they have formed wonderful arches and swim-throughs lined with other encrusting corals and sponges. Copper Sweepers, Jackknife Fish and Atlantic Spadefish often take refuge there, along with Green Morays and a wide variety of marine invertebrates.

Grouper Alley is one of several dives exclusive to Sea Dwellers. This is an unusual deep pocket along the outer reef that harbors a large population of groupers, including Nassau, Tiger and Black. There is no set itinerary of sites at Sea Dwellers, so special dives such as this one can be made on request.

The Christ of the Deep statue and healthy stands of Elkhorn and Antler Corals make **Key Largo Dry Rocks** another perennial favorite. Although the statue was presented to the Underwater Society of America in 1962 by dive gear manufacturer Egidio Cressi, it was destined to take a four year odyssey from Chicago to Orlando to St. Petersburg before reaching the water. Through the perseverance of Ellison Hardee, the first superintendent of Pennekamp Park, the 4,000 pound bronze statue was placed on the Key Largo Dry Rocks reef in 1966. Some impressive Smooth Brain and Pillar Coral formations grow near the statue and there are always swarms of Bermuda Chubs and Sergeant Majors.

SEA DWELLERS WRECK DIVING

Sea Dwellers makes regular visits to the wreck of the Coast Guard Cutter **Duane**. This 327 foot vessel was intentionally sunk just south of Molasses Reef in 1987. The *Duane* rests upright in about 100 feet of water, far enough offshore that it is often washed by the edge of the Gulf Stream. As a result, there is frequently a current on this dive but the visibility is usually superb. An impressive coat of corals and sponges has been accumulating on the ship since 1987 and the fish life it has attracted is incredible!

On a recent trip to the wreck of the **Benwood** with Sea Dwellers, the visibility was 70 to 80 feet and the ship was covered with hundreds of resting Yellow Goatfish. After raking the sand for food during the night, these fish were gathered around the wreck in a protective school, all pointed down at the same 45 degree angle. The *Benwood* is also a great place to see large groups of Porkfish, which we found on the deeper bow section in about 45 feet of water. Some relatively unusual animal colonies

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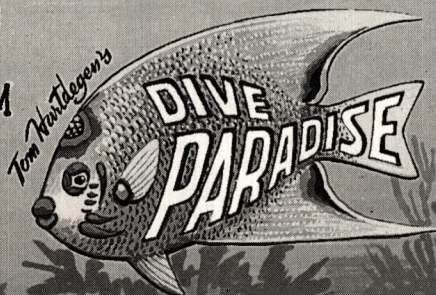
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For information or reservations at Sea Dwellers Dive Center and the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort, call (800) 451-3640 or (305) 451-3640. You can also fax your request to (305) 451-1935 or write to Sea Dwellers at 99850 Overseas Highway, Mile Marker 100, Key Largo, Florida 33037. 🐟

HARVEY'S AQUA CAPSULE

(Continued from Page 18)

The heavy duty dry boots were developed specially for this suit. They look a bit unwieldy but slip easily into swim fins and allow full flexibility and extension while swimming. They are made of rugged, 6.5mm vulcanized rubber and grooved

The Dynat heavy-duty back zipper (right) is guaranteed for the life of the Aqua Capsule. The supple, titanium foil neoprene provides exceptional warmth and comfort.



for long wear, protection and firm footing while on deck. There is a fin strap keeper as an extra measure of safety and the rubber sole is insulated for warmth and comfort.

The kneepads are made from Swiss Kevlar. You may recognize this as the material used in bullet proof vests, inflatable boats and lightweight tank armor among other nondescript uses. Needless to say, it's a good bet they'll stand

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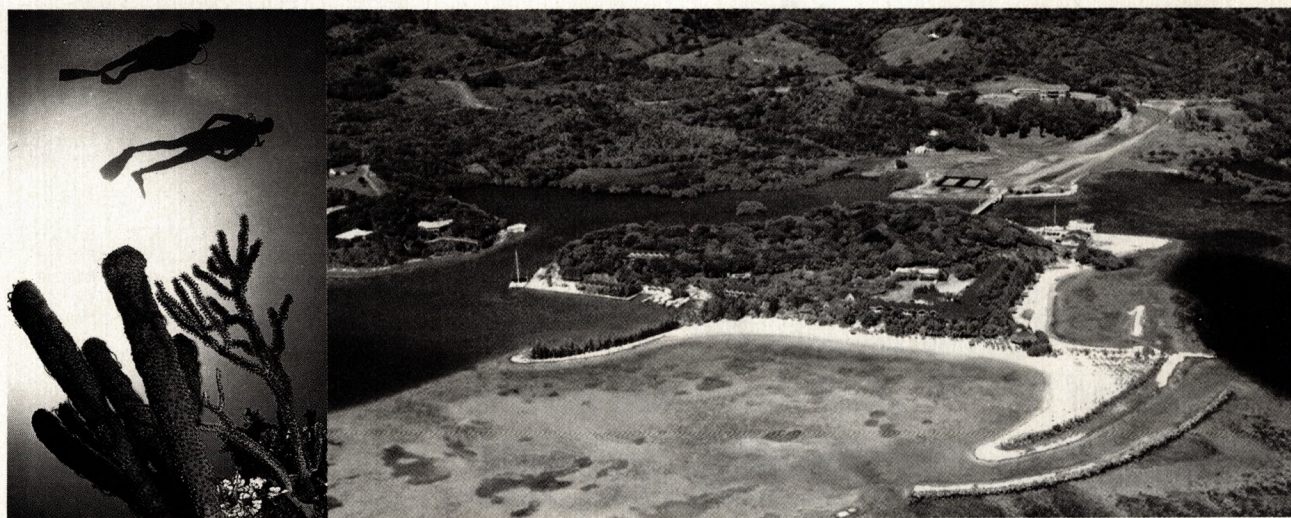
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Field Station

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HARVEY'S AQUA CAPSULE

up to some serious abuse.

The heavy-duty zippers, both back and relief, are Dynat's newly developed side pull version. They are guaranteed for the life of the suit (1,000 cycles). Before using, it is necessary to apply a little beeswax to ensure the seal will be watertight and the pull will be smooth and require less manhandling. As a caveat, be sure you wear an undergarment with a two way zipper in the front so you can use the relief zipper. For you

COMPARISON OF HARVEY'S NEOPRENE DRYSUITS

Model	Titanium Aqua Capsule	Deluxe Aqua Capsule	Sport Aqua Capsule
Price	\$1,800	\$1,308	\$902
Material	6.5mm titanium foil neoprene with Swiss Kevlar kneepads	7mm commercial F grade neoprene with Swiss Kevlar kneepads	6.5mm Soft Stretch neoprene with Cordura kneepads
Attached Boots	Yes; heavy duty	Yes; heavy duty	Yes
Wrist and Neck Seals	Teflon impregnated skin-in	Rubitex G231 skin-in	Rubitex G231 skin-in
Entry	Heavy duty Dynat across the shoulder zipper	Heavy duty Talon across the shoulder zipper	Heavy duty Talon across the shoulder zipper
Colors	Black Black/reflective titanium	Black Black/navy	Black/blue Black/pink
Sizes	S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL; long and short; men's and women's	S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL; long and short; men's only	S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL; long and short; men's and women's
Comments	A tough, heavy duty suit designed for commercial or sport divers.	Heavy duty neoprene withstands compression; for deep divers.	Super comfortable neoprene suit, perfect for sport divers

ladies, well, there are some issues even Harvey's has yet to resolve. But, there is a women's version: it comes without the relief zipper.

To cool down between dives—and you will need to—there are comfortable, inside suspenders that hold the suit up after you've peeled away the top half. They also help with drysuit weight distribution making this suit comfortable even between dives. And, as if Harvey's hasn't thought of everything else, there is an inside nylon chest pocket for keys, wallet,

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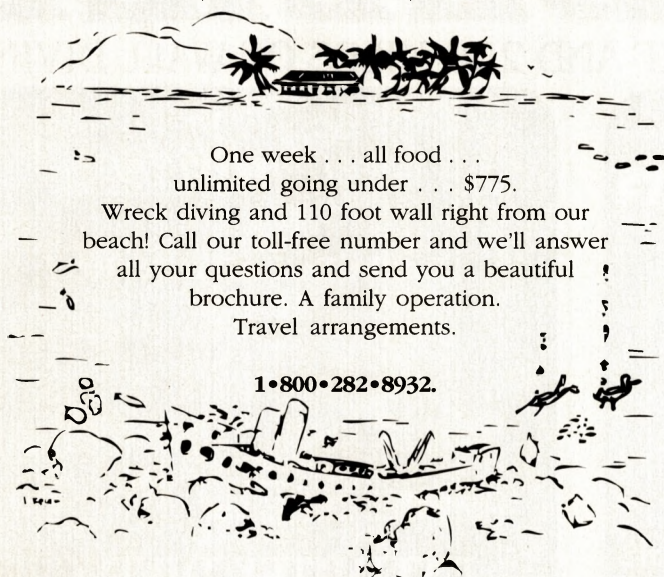
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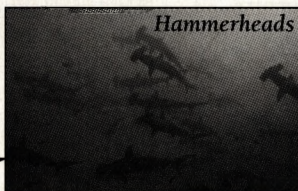


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HARVEY'S AQUA CAPSULE

money and other small valuables safer not
left in the car or unattended on the beach.

USER COMMENTS

Comfort: "This is the most
comfortable neoprene drysuit I
have ever donned, by a good
margin. The neoprene is supple,
providing a welcome freedom of
movement and the titanium foil
layer kept me warm and cozy."

Seepage: "Seepage from the
neck, wrist tendon area and
valves was negligible."

Con: "The exhaust valve was
difficult to use in the automatic
purge configuration."

CONCLUSION

From the first moment man went
forth, he has sought warmth, comfort
and shelter from the harsh elements. In
the world of diving, there are many hos-
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the market for a drysuit understands,
cold is a biggie, as is comfort. Super-
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SEA & SEA YS-120 DUO

(Continued from Page 59)

Motor Marine and Sea & Sea housings.

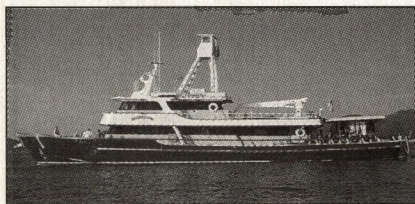
To avoid corrosion, the YS-120 Duo uses very few metal parts in the housing. Most of the parts are high impact plastic, joined with metal. The only exception is in the flash arm control where stainless steel screws into stainless steel. Even this metal to metal contact is protected with a special plastic washer. The sync cord for the Motor Marine is plastic at both ends, while the cord for the Nikonos and housings has plastic at the flash end and a metal similar to that of the camera at the other end. This similar metal reduces electrolysis.

The Sea & Sea YS-120 Duo strobe is an excellent piece of modern engineering. The folks at Sea & Sea have carefully analyzed what underwater photographers need and ultimately demand. The YS-120 Duo's compact size and weight give it versatility, which makes it an excellent addition to your underwater photo system. If you're in the market for a strobe, no matter what type of camera system you own, Sea & Sea's YS-120 Duo will do the job. Give it a flash!

For more information or the name of your nearest Sea & Sea dealer, contact the company at 2105 Camino Vida Roble, Suite L, Carlsbad, CA 92009; (619) 929-1909, (619) 929-0098 (fax).

SOLMAR V ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

The stylish new live-aboard *Solmar V* is fast becoming known for unusual marine animal encounters. Besides Hammerheads, sealions and Whale Sharks, one lucky Sea of Cortez trip was met by a young adult Elephant Seal at Los Islotes. To the delight of the passengers, this 500 pound pinniped got close and personal with the divers.



Although intimate encounters with 20 foot Giant Mantas and sharks are the norm, divers on a Socorro Island trip were unexpectedly visited by a mother and calf Humpback Whale and on another trip were diving with wild Bottlenose Dolphins at O'Neil Rock and The Boiler. This year promises to be just as exciting. Spaces are still available on the April and May trips to the Socorro Islands. For information and reservations call (800) 344-3349.



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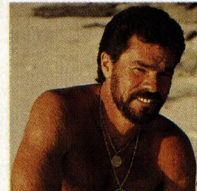
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Xanadu Undersea

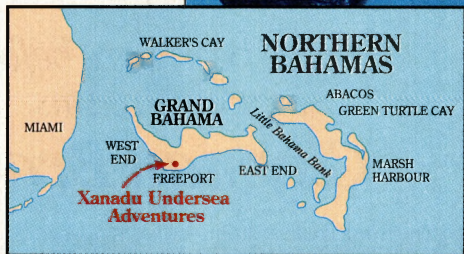
Distinctive Diving Escapades in The Bahamas

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BILL HARRIGAN

You're 45 feet below the surface when suddenly you're face to face with a hungry, eight foot Caribbean Reef Shark—what do you do? If you're at **Shark Alley** with the adventure specialists from Xanadu Undersea Adventures, you just relax and enjoy a unique encounter with one of the most beautiful creatures on earth. Handfeeding wild sharks is only one of the thrilling Grand Bahama diving experiences you can have with Xanadu Undersea Adventures. Are your dive trips starting to be repetitive? Ready to try something new? Try a trip like this with Xanadu!

DISCOVERY CRUISES

First, you start by cruising to The Bahamas aboard a luxury liner. Discovery Cruise Lines and Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures, of which Xanadu Undersea Adventures is an affiliate, offer several cruise/dive packages or you can make up your own schedule. Discovery ships leave each morning from Miami or Ft. Lauderdale, arriving in Freeport in the early afternoon. Covered parking is available next to the terminal and check-in is a breeze. Instead of waiting for an hour in a crowded airport gate area, you can go right aboard and sit down to breakfast. The trip over takes about five hours, which is not enough time to sample everything cruise director Mo Day has arranged. You can choose from live shows, movies, trapshooting and gambling or just bask in the sun by the pool. Children can enjoy clowns, balloons and face painting at Club Manatee. Cabins and suites are available if you want some private time.



Dave Burroughs faces a hungry, eight foot Caribbean Reef Shark (*Carcharhinus perezii*) at Shark Alley. Below: Xanadu Beach Resort.



Adventures



Above: Tara Zonderland inspects Theo's Wreck, a 238 foot freighter in 100 feet of water. Below: Cruise to The Bahamas in luxury aboard *Discovery 1*.



Discovery Cruise Lines takes great pride in quality service, particularly in the dining rooms. High tea is an elegant event that shouldn't be missed and the \$10 fee on the return trip to upgrade your dinner to a seven course gourmet experience is worthwhile.

In addition to being just plain fun, cruising to The Bahamas has a couple of distinct advantages for divers. The first is that you can bring all the heavy dive and camera gear you want. Your check-in baggage is loaded onto containers right at the curb, which are in turn loaded directly into the ship's hold. You get them right off the same containers at the other end. The second advantage is that you can dive the morning of your departure, since you don't have to worry about the effects of altitude, as you do on an airplane.

GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND

The Customs and Immigration procedures at the Grand Bahama port are well organized, so you'll be on the way to your hotel quickly. Grand Bahama is a lovely island, well groomed and as different from Nassau and Paradise Island as New York is from New Mexico. A well planned road system makes it easy to get around. Most of the activity is in the Freeport area, near either the International Bazaar or the Port Lucaya Marketplace. Shopping in Freeport is an international experience, with goods from around the world. Although you can find almost anything, the leather goods, perfumes and jewelry are particularly good. Restaurants run the full range from fast food chains to gourmet French and Italian cuisine. The center square at Port Lucaya features

nightly live entertainment. With many restaurants arranged around the square, it's always interesting there and the place really gets jumping on the weekends.

XANADU UNDERSEA ADVENTURES

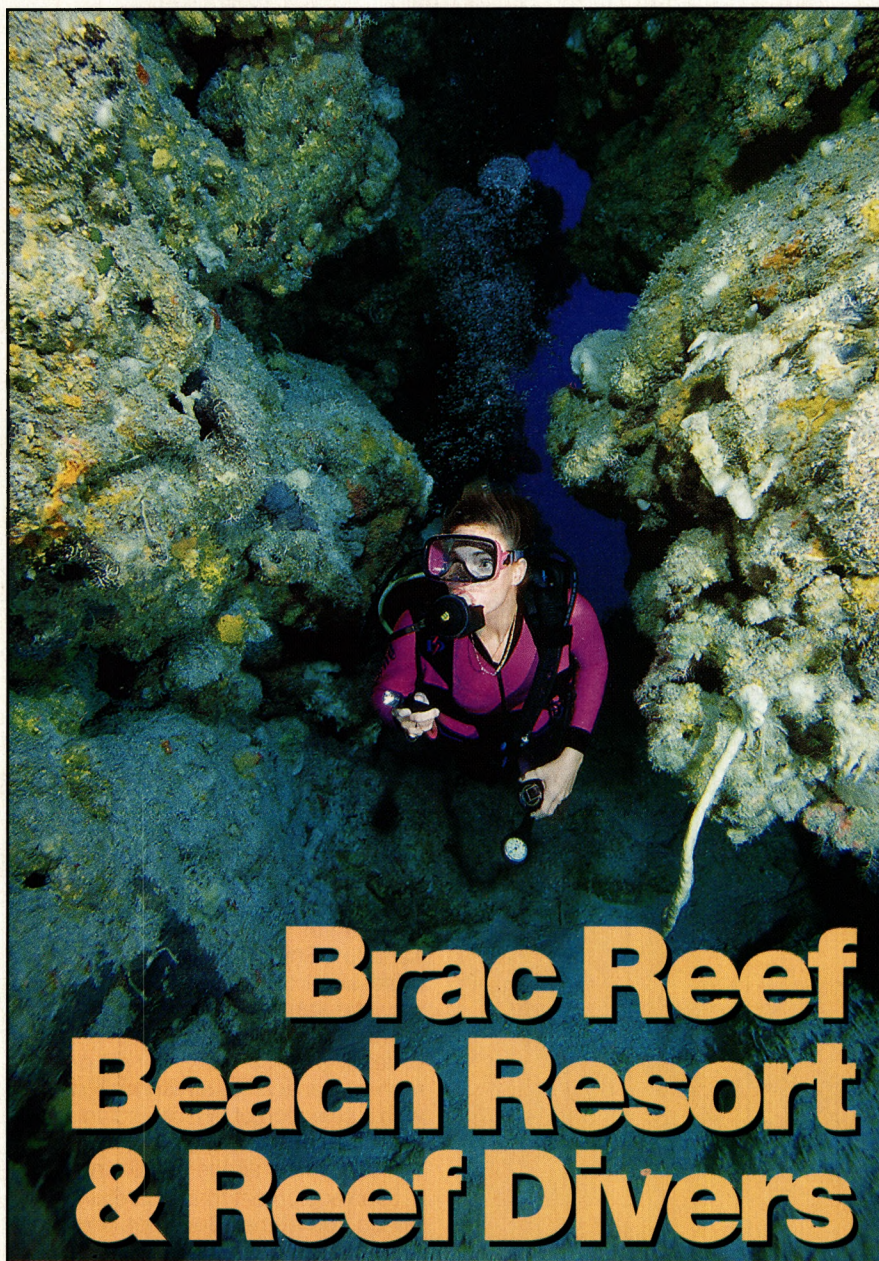
Your host for this dive adventure is Xanadu Undersea Adventures, where the warm, friendly atmosphere will make you feel right at home. Owner Louis Chan has called Grand Bahama home for the last 30 years and wants everyone to enjoy the island as much as he does. You'll probably feel like a lifelong friend of Dave Burroughs, the operator of Xanadu Undersea Adventures, by the end of your first day. Dave depends on instructors Vince Britton, Kieron Baudains, Dale Burroughs and Sean Adderly to make your diving adventures exciting but safe. In the shop you'll meet Shanna Kemp and Eva Mitchell, who will get you through the paperwork with a minimum of fuss.

So you may enjoy this adventure again and again, the Xanadu video experts can record your dive for you and produce a custom tape of your experience on VHS. If you're interested in making your own underwater video, you'll be delighted by the facilities available at Xanadu Undersea Adventures. They have full video recording, editing and transferring capability. You can bring your own gear or rent Xanadu's Sony TR-81 Hi-8 camera and professional quality Gates housing. Either way, the Xanadu staff can help you turn the raw tape into a polished feature, complete with musical score. For still photographers, Xanadu has a Nikonos V camera with a selection of lenses, including the superb 15mm wide angle. A Nikonos SB 103 underwater strobe is also available.

Even equipment that is carefully maintained sometimes develops problems and, according to Murphy's Law, that will usually occur when you need it the most—such as on your dive vacation. Xanadu's full service repair center will probably be able to get you going again in short order. With 30 sets of rental gear, including Sherwood regulators and Sea Quest and Sherwood BCs, you can show up for this diving adventure with just your C-card. Storage for customer gear is provided in a ventilated, secure area, so you don't have to drag it back to your room every night.

A powerful Bauer K-15 compressor is used to keep two big storage bottles, totaling 18,000 cubic feet of air, topped off. This system makes it easy for Xanadu to keep 100 scuba tanks ready to go with clean, pure air. Xanadu Undersea Adventures also has ten tanks reserved for nitrox and is the only nitrox fill station on Grand Bahama. These tanks are

(Continued on Page 110)



Brac Reef Beach Resort & Reef Divers



Above: A diver explores a canyon. Left: The Pro 42 jet boat, Manta. Below: Brac Reef Beach Resort offers ocean views, charming modern accommodations and a new full service dive center, Reef Divers.



For 12 years the oceanfront Brac Reef Beach Resort, with its tall coconut palms and seagrape trees, has been the picture perfect tropical vacation retreat. But as most dive travelers know, there is more to a resort than just a charming setting in an idyllic locale. The atmosphere should go hand in hand with service—and Brac Reef Beach Resort delivers.

The accommodations, 40 rooms housed in a two story, L-shaped building, were recently completely renovated. The air-conditioned rooms feature clean, modern furnishings (with either two queen sized beds or one king). Each is complete with ceiling fan, tile flooring (some rooms are carpeted) and color TV providing CNN, HBO and a few stateside channels. Ground level rooms have porches that face the resort's courtyard, while half of the second floor units now have balconies overlooking the same area. The courtyard includes a large freshwater swimming pool, wooden sun-deck and six person hot tub. The buildings, with their pastel peach and white color scheme, have an island flavor.

Fortunately, some things never change. The resort still has charming wooden walkways and a dinner selection of Caymanian and continental cuisine, served buffetstyle in the air-conditioned Coral Garden Dining Room fronting the patio area and bar. Also unchanged is the two story, open sided pier extending over the water. Capitalizing on the island's soothing sea breezes and ocean view, the thatched roofed, wooden

Idyllic Locale, Great Services

**TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY WALT STEARNS**

structure, with its old-fashioned porch swings, is still a great spot for relaxation.

A little more than a year ago the resort's new dive center, Reef Divers, opened. The facility, which faces the resort's pier, handles everything from rental gear to repairs and airfills. There is also a retail shop stocked with sundries and T-shirts. With a staff of instructors affiliated with PADI, NAUI or SSI, the center can provide just about anything from basic to advanced open water and dive-master certifications, including several specialty courses.

In the same building is the resort's photo center, run by underwater photo pro Ed Beaty. The center is stocked with film, batteries and a complement of Nikonos V bodies, lenses (from 35 to 15mm) and strobes, as well as two 8mm

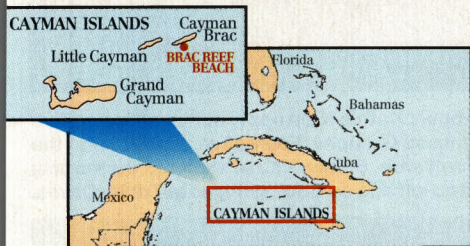
U/W video systems. Ed is on hand to lend his expertise for photography, videography and to shoot a personalized video of your underwater vacation. The video, free with Brac Reef's seven night dive package, can be copied to 8mm, Hi-8 or VHS tape.

After checking in with the dive center, each guest is provided a numbered mesh bag for dive equipment. Simply stuff it with your gear, place it outside your room and one of the staff will take it to the gear storage room until your first dive. From that point on it is automatically picked up and delivered to and from the boat.

Once guests have done their initial gear setup, the crew will take over the task for the remainder of the visit. Feel free to do last minute adjustments or double check gear before entering the water.

Of course, Reef Divers prowls the waters of Cayman Brac in a modern fleet of dive boats. This includes one Pro 42 jet boat called the *Manta* and a 42 foot Newton Dive Special named *Little Sister*. A second Newton 42 will most likely be added well before this issue hits the press.

The most impressive of the two boats, the Newton 42, is powered by twin 3116 Caterpillar diesels, providing a quick cruising speed of 22 knots (even with a full load of guests and dive gear). The aft deck area is roomy and unobstructed, with tank storage along the sides. The boat can easily handle 30 divers but typically runs with 12 to 17. Other amenities include a full width, step down dive plat-



form with dual ladders, head, shower, dry storage, cold drinking water and a cooler stocked with a variety of snacks. There's also a carpeted camera table with storage shelf below.

In addition to the on-board amenities, I liked the way Reef Divers treats its guests. After the dive briefing and suiting up, a crew member brings you a tank while you wait on the swim platform. Following the dive, the tank is changed and your setup placed in its rack. Experienced divers (in buddy teams) are basically given the opportunity to dive the way they wish, as long as it is within the guidelines set by the Cayman Islands Watersport Operators Association — 110 feet maximum depth with computers (all others 100 feet), no decompres-

(Continued on Page 130)

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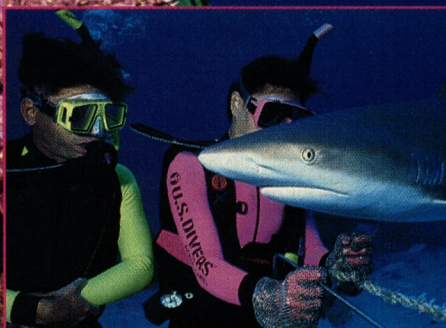
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Bob Soto's Seven Mile

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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

It's rare to find spectacular diving adjacent to luxury hotels, dining and shopping. Grand Cayman just happens to be one of those rarities.

At Seven Mile Beach, you can enjoy spectacular diving adventures within sight of your hotel or condo. Dive boat rides are short 10 to 20 minute commutes. You can spend the morning exploring a breathtaking 100 foot wall, followed by a shallow reef dive and be back on the beach for an early lunch. Your afternoon can be devoted to sailing, windsurfing, parasailing, sunbathing or more scuba diving if you prefer.

The combination of world-class diving, luxury living and fabulous watersports makes Seven Mile Beach just about the best place in the Caribbean—especially among divers.

WHY IS IT SO GOOD?

Grand Cayman is blessed with the most unique geographical and geological circumstances. Seven Mile Beach is on the West Side of Grand Cayman, fully protected from the prevailing winds. As a result, the sea's surface is

often glassy calm in the morning and rarely has any significant wave action year-round. This makes for calm, comfortable boat diving.

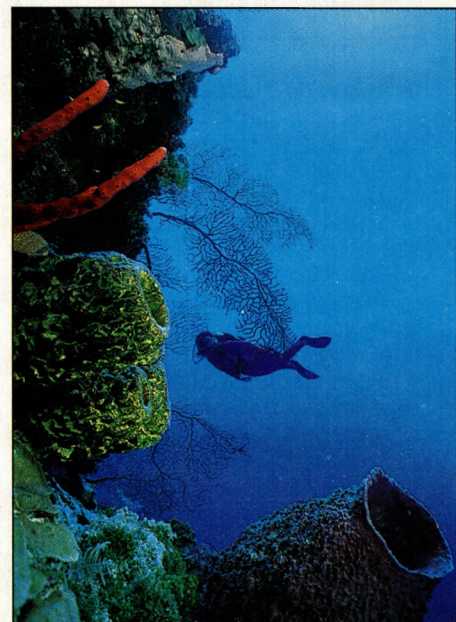
Running parallel to Seven Mile Beach, about one-quarter to one-half mile offshore, is Grand Cayman's **West Wall**—one of the most prolific and beautiful drop-offs in the Caribbean. Beginning at an average depth of 50 feet, this wall drops vertically to depths of 1,000 to 2,000 feet.

Since Grand Cayman is virtually a mountain peak surrounded by open ocean, her waters are crystal clear. Typical underwater visibility on the drop-off is 100 feet—150 feet on a good day. The island has no rivers for runoff and the Seven Mile Beach area has no bays or mangrove estuaries that are flushed with the outgoing tide.

About 100 yards inshore from the edge of the drop-off is a chain of shallow coral reefs ranging in depth from 20 to 50 feet. Each of these formations is populated with flourishing corals, a wide variety of reef fish and many other fascinating marine creatures.



Above: Kathie Kipp approaches an inquisitive Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*) at the Oro Verde. **Below:** Kathie explores the vertical drop-off and colorful sponges at Trinity Caves.



Beach

Grand Cayman

Ron Kipp



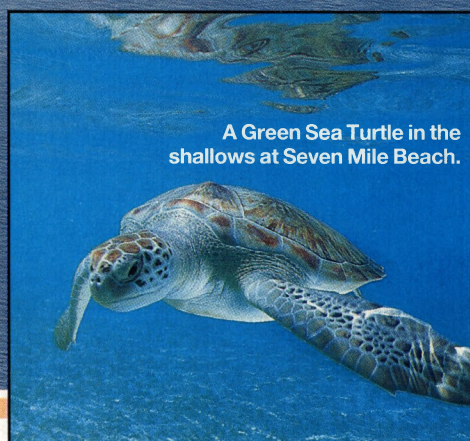
Kathie Kipp



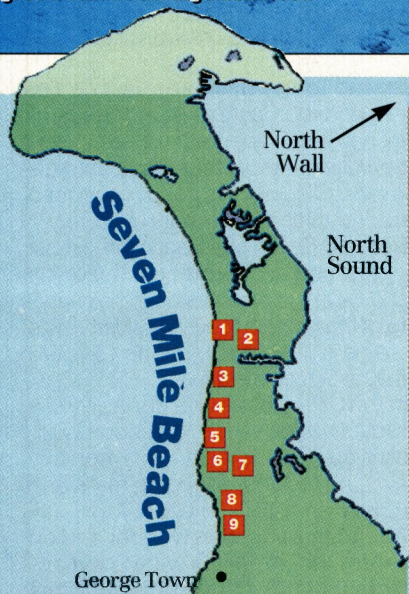
A silvery Tarpon swims with Kathie at Big Tunnels.



A friendly French Angelfish greets Kathie at Angelfish Reef.



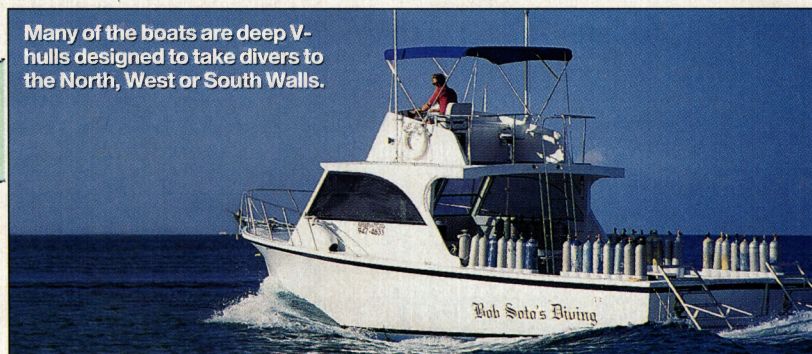
A Green Sea Turtle in the shallows at Seven Mile Beach.



- 1 Holiday Inn on the Beach
- 2 Bob Soto's Diving at Holiday Inn
- 3 Coral Caymanian Hotel
- 4 Bob Soto's Diving
- 5 Plantation Village Resort
- 6 Treasure Island Resort
- 7 Scuba Sensations
- 8 Bob Soto's Headquarters
- 9 Bob Soto's Scuba Centre



Several of Bob Soto's dive boats are designed to board passengers right from Seven Mile Beach.



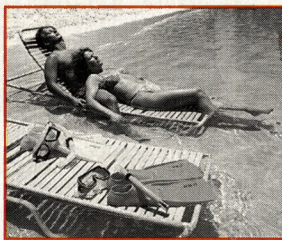
Many of the boats are deep V-hulls designed to take divers to the North, West or South Walls.

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BOB SOTO'S SEVEN MILE BEACH

Diving along the West Wall and Seven Mile Beach seems to be getting better and better each year. The fish have



Holiday Inn on the Beach is a luxury resort right in the middle of Seven Mile Beach.



Plantation Village is a luxury condominium resort right on Seven Mile Beach.



Treasure Island Resort is a mid-priced resort at the south end of Seven Mile Beach.

adapted to the daily appearance of divers and the Cayman Islands government has wisely adopted marine conservation laws that protect these animals from spearfishing. It is not unusual for a Tarpon or turtle to swim right up to you.

Because Seven Mile Beach is the most beautiful and best protected beach on Grand Cayman, it has become the central core of the island's tourism industry. The shoreline is populated by some 15 hotels and 20 to 30 condominiums.

In turn, the hotels and condos have attracted a wide variety of support businesses that include restaurants, comedy shows, nightclubs, shopping malls and ice cream and yogurt shops.

Add to this vacation wonderland an excellent assortment of watersport operators that offer all sorts of activities from sunset cruises to parasailing. When it comes to fun and excitement, Seven Mile Beach has it all!

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length are 44 boat moorings, marking the location of some of Grand Cayman's best dives. Seven Mile Beach not only offers calm seas and crystal clear water—it also possesses tremendous variety in its undersea attractions.

About one-half of all the West Side moorings are spectacular dives along the vertical drop-off. Each site is distinctly different and intricately shaped. They include such intriguing names as **Trinity Caves**, **Orange Canyon**, **Sentinel Rock**, **Big Dipper**, **Wall Street** and **Sand Chute**.

Among the remaining sites there are equally fascinating shallow reefs such as **Spanish Anchor**, **Mitch Miller Reef**, **Jax Dax**, **Paradise** and **Peter's Reef**.

The Seven Mile Beach region is also home for many wreck dives such as *Oro Verde*, **Balboa**, **Doc Polson** and the **Cali**. Each wreck is a natural congregation area for all sorts of marine life.

Add to this magnificent collection still another group of dive sites that offers coral grotto, cave and tunnel exploration: **Soto's North**, **Soto's Central**, **Soto's South Fish Pot** and **Pagent Reef**.

When it comes to marine life encounters, few places can rival the variety of animals. Great silvery Tarpon float among coral canyons at **Big Tunnels**.

BOB SOTO'S DIVING LIMITED INFORMATION/RESERVATIONS

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Bob Soto's Diving, Ltd.
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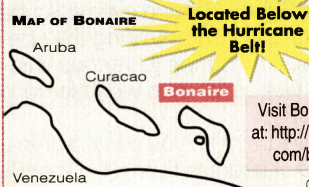
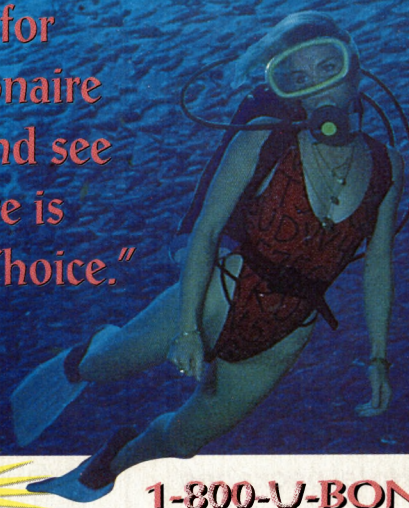
You may also see Tarpon feeding on Silversides in the caves at **Soto's North** or **Pagent Reef**. Tame Green Sea Turtles can be seen all along the West Wall or feeding in the shallows of the beach area. Graceful Spotted Eagle Rays glide along the outer edge of the West Wall. Large schools of grunts and snappers hang suspended over shallow corals at **Wildlife** and **Rhapsody Reefs**.

Delicate but friendly Gray and French Angelfish come right up to your face-mask at **Angelfish City**, **Aquarium** and many other sites. A Green Moray lives on the **Oro Verde**. At **Bonnie's Arch**, a school of Horse-eye Jacks snoozes un-

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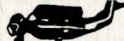
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BOB SOTO'S SEVEN MILE BEACH

der the coral archway. **Royal Palms Ledge** is a fantastic night dive where you can observe the rare Orange Ball Anemones.

DIVE SERVICES

When the original Bob Soto opened his first dive center in 1957, it is no surprise he selected Seven Mile Beach for his headquarters. Even then, it was obvious this strand of pure white sand would some day be a major vacation playground. It had everything: a calm sea, warm water, beautiful beach, spectacular sunsets and great diving.

And, 39 years later, Seven Mile Beach continues to be the main headquarters for Bob Soto's Diving Limited. Although Bob himself has since retired, Ron and Kathie Kipp continue the Bob Soto's tradition.

The company has flourished under their guidance and today Bob Soto's is one of the Caribbean's largest and longest established diving operations—with 46 employees, 9 dive boats, 5 buses, 4 retail stores and a shore diving based scuba school. All of these facilities are spread out along the length of Seven Mile Beach, from the Holiday Inn (north) to the Scuba Centre (south).

Priding themselves on customer service, the Bob Soto's dive boat crews and scuba instructors are some of the friendliest on the island. They go out of their way to make your vacation a memorable event. As a result, many customers come back year after year.

As part of its motto, "the customer is king," Bob Soto's Diving offers the longest and most comprehensive menu of diving activities and experiences—a total of 11 different kinds of dive boat trips, nine different levels of diving instruction and three types of snorkeling trips.

No matter what your diving interest or scuba skill level, Bob Soto's can offer a variety of options. It operates a standard morning two tank trip consisting of a wall dive to 100 feet followed by a shallow reef dive to 50 feet. There are also one tank afternoon dives, one tank night dives, two tank double wall dives and three tank dives.

With a fleet of boats at its disposal, Bob Soto's takes its diving customers to all four sides of Grand Cayman. While the West Wall is the most popular destination, dive trips are also conducted on the North Wall, South Wall and even a Scuba Safari to the East End. Among the specialty dives, it runs trips to various shipwrecks as well as tours to world famous **Stingray City**.

As for dive training, you can enroll in a wide range of courses from a beginner's

resort course to a repeat resort, a PADI open water scuba course, advanced open water scuba or any specialty course in night, wreck or deep diving.

Another customer service at Bob Soto's is the underwater photography department, which offers Sea & Sea 35mm camera rentals, video buddy services or private videos.

HOTELS AND CONDOS

Bob Soto's doesn't stop at just the diving. Over the years it has developed a menu of vacation packages with some of Grand Cayman's top hotels and condos. Once again, it has remained faithful to its basic philosophy, "Seven Mile Beach is the best there is."

All Soto's vacation packages are with hotels and condos on Seven Mile Beach, with easy access to the Caribbean.

HOLIDAY INN ON THE BEACH is a luxury resort with full services and lively entertainment. It is right at the center of Seven Mile Beach, with the *Oro Verde* straight out from the hotel. This mid-size resort has 231 rooms, two bars, a freeform swimming pool, outdoor candlelight dining by the pool, numerous stores and services. Evening entertainment includes a Comedy Club and live entertainment, dancing with Barefoot and his band. The Holiday Inn is the headquarters of Bob Soto's Dive Centre and the departure point for many boat trips.

TREASURE ISLAND is a moderately priced full service resort at the south end of Seven Mile Beach. Its sprawling facilities include 290 rooms, three bars, two restaurants, two swimming pools, a hot-tub, a shopping arcade and a huge open air lobby. This resort is the home of Scuba Sensations, a new dive operation that utilizes Bob Soto's Diving and Peter Milburn's Dive Cayman for daily trips.

CORAL CAYMANIAN HOTEL is a budget beachfront hotel that offers limited services and very modest prices. It has 11 apartments with assorted one, two or three bedrooms. There are no dining facilities but restaurants and bars are nearby. All of the rooms are air-conditioned and have a phone and TV. Bob Soto's Diving provides daily five minute bus service to its boats, as well as the return trip to the hotel.

PLANTATION VILLAGE is a luxury condominium beach resort near the south end of Seven Mile Beach, close to town. This upscale facility offers fully equipped apartments with elegant furnishings. The facilities consist of 70 two bedroom/two bathroom air-conditioned suites, complete with a full kitchen, dining area, living room and screened in balcony (or patio). There are two freshwater swimming pools, a hottub, lighted tennis courts and a children's playground. This resort is ideal for families and an abso-

lute bargain for four divers (or two couples) who wish to share the cost. As with all Bob Soto's Diving packages, free bus service provides transportation to and from the boats.

WITHIN EASY REACH

Grand Cayman is one of the easiest islands to reach, anywhere in the Caribbean. It is 480 miles due south of Miami—hardly more than a one hour trip by jet. Frequent airline service to Grand Cayman is available through Miami International or other major gateway cities such as Atlanta, Houston, Orlando or Tampa.



The warm, friendly Cayman Islands hospitality begins right at the airport when you check in for your Cayman Airways flight. This small but hardy airline company has been flying divers to the island for more than 28 years. As the official airline of Bob Soto's Diving, it operates a fleet of modern 737 jets.

Once comfortably seated aboard the aircraft, travelers are offered a traditional rum punch or a nonalcoholic fruit punch. Upon arrival at Grand Cayman's Owens International Airport, visitors quickly pass through a modern air-conditioned Immigrations and Customs.

ONE STOP SHOPPING

Bob Soto's Diving offers the kind of one stop shopping that makes planning a vacation easy and convenient. The reservations headquarters is in Atlanta, with a tollfree telephone service.

As part of the customer service philosophy, Bob Soto's has developed a comprehensive travel service—"One call does it all." It can book your airlines, accommodations, diving and even your car rental—with astonishing speed and savings.

Bob Soto's experienced reservationists have all been to Grand Cayman and are experts on diving, accommodations, dining, shopping and the island in general. They can tell you where to stay, what dives would be best for your skill level and interests and what training courses you might be interested in taking. Their goal is to make your vacation such a terrific experience that you will want to come back the following year. 🐠

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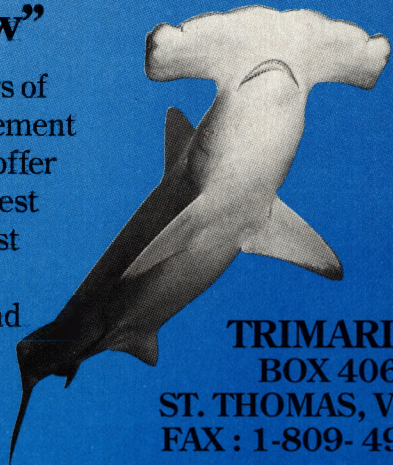
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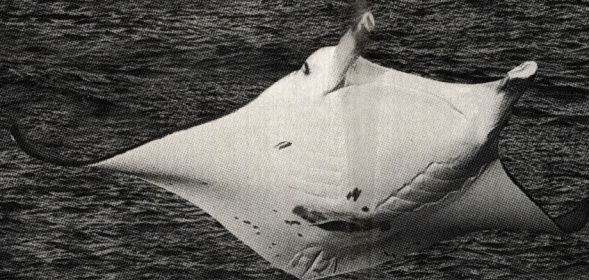
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FLORIDA

DIVE GUIDE TO THE SUNSHINE STATE



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY VANDERBILT

FLORIDA

Diving Diversity from the Keys to the Panhandle

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHIRLEY VANDERBILT

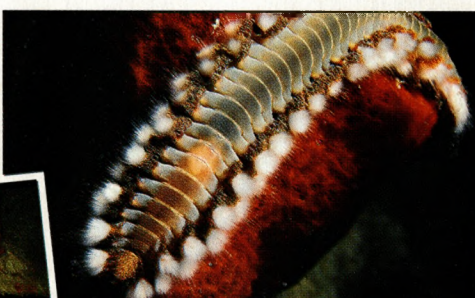
Florida is unequalled for its diversity in diving and water sports. From the pine covered forests of the north to the palm tree fringed limestone Keys of the south, the state's natural resources are varied and contrasting. It is this diversity and the state's geologic history that make Florida such a unique dive destination. Where else could you go from bubbling freshwater springs to living coral reefs; from emerald gulf waters to the turquoise of the Caribbean; and from high tech big city life to quaint, tropical resorts—all in one dive trip?

Many are discovering the convenience and excitement of a Florida dive vacation. Known officially as The Sunshine State, Florida offers an inviting climate year-round, with water temperatures usually ranging from the high 70s in the winter to an inviting 85°F during summer months. The more than 12,000 miles of shore, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean, are lined with exquisite beaches, more than 4,000 barrier islands and cays and an abundance of exotic wildlife.

Florida is relatively young in geologic time, the last of our country's land masses to emerge from the sea, even now exhibiting copious amounts of water along the surface in the form of lakes, rivers



The Green Moray Eels (*Gymnothorax funebris*) at Islamorada's Davis Reef show no fear of divers.



Ft. Lauderdale's invertebrates, such as this Bearded Fireworm (*Hermodice carunculata*), are perfect for macrophotography.



An invertebrate encrusted porthole on the Duane presents an excellent photo opportunity.

and springs. The forces of nature have shaped both the interior and exterior limestone base of the state into intriguing forms. Cool, primeval springs dot the central and panhandle areas. Along the eastern coastline, huge rock formations just offshore provide home to corals and prolific marine life; in the Lower Keys the only living coral reef in continental North America thrives.

You'll find Florida's history is just as colorful as that of any Caribbean island, highlighted with exploits of conquistadors and pirates, warring Indians and Europeans and, in more ancient times, the wanderings of prehistoric animals. Along with visits to Orlando's popular theme parks, vacationers are discovering the adventure of exploring 17th century forts, reconstructed Spanish settlements such as old St. Augustine and the rich natural settings of state parks. Today Florida is a bustling center of commerce as well as a tropical vacation destination, affording residents and guests a well developed infrastructure and endless leisure time pursuits. Flights to international airports in the larger cities are complemented by smaller commuter services throughout the state. Interstate highway systems crisscross, making auto travel convenient as well. Up and down the coast there's an assortment of accommodations from rustic mom and pop motels to the most

luxurious resorts and spas. You can have your vacation with or without the glamour and glitz but you'll always be able to find something suitable for your specific needs and budget.

Florida has extraordinary offerings of fresh and salt water dive experiences. With highly successful artificial reef programs throughout the state and the remnants of ancient sailing ships littering the ocean floor, Florida is a hot spot for wreck diving. The proximity of the Gulf Stream brings many migrating species of marine life close to shore and the living coral reefs of the Keys provide even the most inexperienced diver with a safe, shallow environment for enjoying nature's beauty. And so we begin our journey, where some of the first divers began, in the Florida Keys.

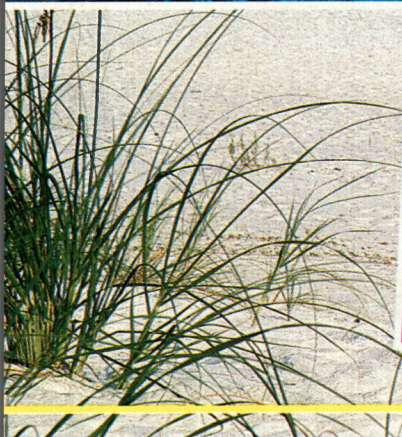
THE FLORIDA KEYS

For 115 miles from Key Largo to Key West, the Florida Keys hop, skip and jump along the juncture of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, from a northeastern to southwestern direction off the tip of Florida. Charming in atmosphere and drenched in natural beauty, the Keys are the American version of the Caribbean, with white sand beaches, calm turquoise waters and coconut palms here and there. Added bonuses to choosing the Keys as a dive destination is that you don't need a passport and the natives all speak English. Connected by the Overseas Highway (U.S. Route 1), the islands vary some-

what in population, development and character as well as configuration. What they do have in common is an incredible underwater ecosystem, thousands of years in the making, that continues to thrive in the warm, clear waters fringing them. Interspersed with the living animals are the skeletons and ghosts of glorious sailing ships ravaged by hurricanes and split apart by the jagged corals. There are modern wrecks as well, strategically placed to benefit both the marine environment and the diver. For nearly 40 years, portions of the reef system have been protected as a state park and national sanctuary. Now, more recent legislation has designated the entire Florida Keys area as a marine sanctuary. Throughout these waters, mooring buoys have been established to maintain the integrity of the reefs and their inhabitants.

The majority of reef formations are spur and groove, configurations where high profile coral mounds cut by sand channels lead from shallow to deeper waters. The waters immediately surrounding the islands are so shallow that the reef system doesn't actually begin for several miles offshore. However, snorkelers will find plenty of small coral-heads chock full of life along the beaches. On the gulf side, the mangroves bordering the shoreline provide a protective nursery for juveniles of all types, such as Spiny Lobsters. The shallow depths of the Keys and the beauty of the environment are what draw so many visitors—more than a million each year. And, it is in the shallow depths that divers will find

Left: A seafan and sponge arrangement diverts a diver's attention from the wreckage of the *Benwood*. The site is also visited by Barracuda (below). Right: A Loggerhead Turtle rests on a reef off Palm Beach.

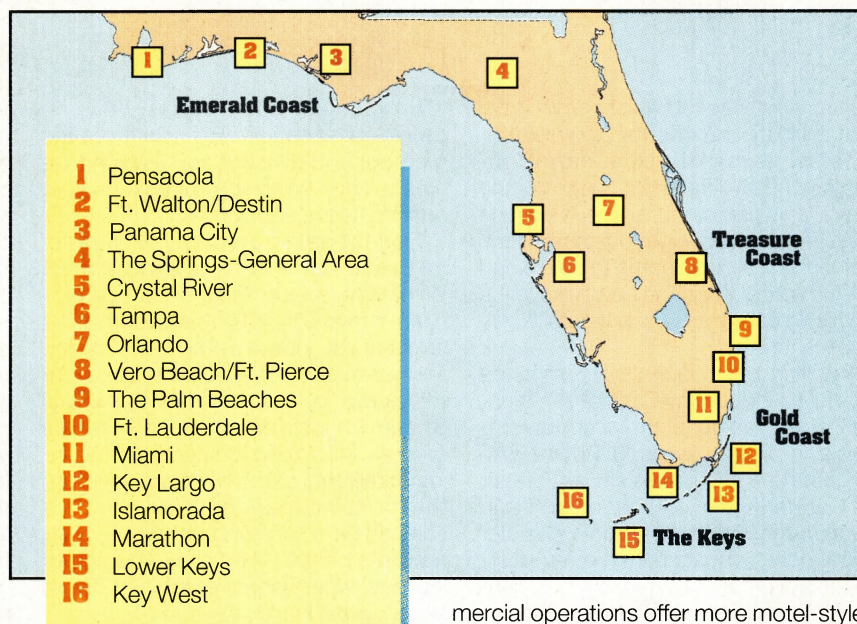


FLORIDA

the most colorful array of corals and sponges, a bonus for those who seek longer bottoms times with less physical stress.

Actually, stress is practically an unknown entity in the Keys, where everyone kicks back to a more relaxed lifestyle and fewer accouterments. Most days are sunny and warm, requiring only T-shirts and shorts. The influence of the Gulf Stream coming close to shore affects not only the enjoyable warm climate but also the temperature and clarity of the water. Visibility ranges from about 30 on an off day to more than 100 feet. Dive conditions are generally ideal in the summer months, with flat seas and U/W temperatures rising to the mid 80s (°F). Winter does bring some periods of increased winds and slightly cooling seas but, for the most part, you'll still find the conditions closely resembling a Caribbean paradise. Just be sure to bring a wetsuit and expect cooler evenings at this time of the year.

Travel by car is probably the most expedient way to see the Keys but don't expect expressways. Slow down, enjoy the view and plan plenty of extra sightseeing



time along the way. Miami's international airport is about an hour's drive from Key Largo and there's also a small commuter airport at Marathon, halfway between Key Largo and Key West. Marinas are available everywhere and, like the local motels and hotels, range from basic to luxurious. For those who enjoy camping the state parks are excellent, while com-

mercial operations offer more motel-style amenities. In addition to the fast food chains, the Keys offer outstanding fresh seafood and island cuisine.

LOWER KEYS: DRY TORTUGAS, KEY WEST, BIG PINE KEY. From the Dry Tortugas to quiet Big Pine Key, the Lower Keys offer an unsurpassed natural beauty, with broad expanses of mangroves, shallow waters for wading birds and an incredible array of marine life. The least pop-

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ulated of the chain, with the exception of Key West, these islands include many unspoiled keys such as Sugarloaf, Cudjoe and Saddlebunch. But, the main attractions to dive tourists lie in the eccentricities of Key West, the drama of the Dry Tortugas and the majesty of preserved Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary.

Tiny Key West, with its illustrious history of pirates, Hemingway, sponge divers and wreckers, is now focused on entertaining the endless visitors who cruise zany Duval Street. A town of colorful characters, quaint turn of the century homes and a world famous sunset celebration at Mallory Square, Key West also offers great diversity underwater. An abundance of wrecks surrounds Key West, providing home to myriad sea creatures. Several have become permanent residences for grandfather sized Jewfish, now protected from exploitation after near extinction. The 187 foot **Cayman Salvager**, sitting upright at 90 feet, is home to Elvis the Jewfish and a large, handfed Green Moray Eel. The **Tug** also attracts several of these larger fish along with schools of jacks and Barracuda. Another popular wreck, the destroyer escort **Alexander**, now lies split in two sections, with a portion visible above the surface and deck guns still in place.

Sand Key, a favorite gathering place for weekend boaters, offers swimming, snorkeling and diving in waters ranging in depth from a few feet to 65. Marked by an old iron lighthouse dating to 1853, the site has plenty of mooring buoys to protect the reef. **Ten Fathom Ledge**, south of Sand Key, begins at 25 feet with a sheer wall dropping to 130. Sightings of pelagics are common here. The **Dry Rocks** area features large coral heads with sand gullies, perfect shelters for Nurse Sharks and stingrays. **Eastern Dry Rocks**, with shallow depths of 25 to 35 feet, is home to a wreck of unknown origin, while nearby **Rock Key** also has several ancient wrecks of interest.

The **Western, Eastern and Middle Sambos**, spur and groove formations divided into distinct areas by expanses of white sand, are shallow reefs providing habitat for tropicals and crustaceans. Other favorite sites include **Ball and Chain**, whose 15 foot profile includes cement balls and chains from old channel markers, and **Kedge Ledge**, home of two 18th century schooners with eight foot anchors. For advanced divers there's a drift along the **All Alone Wreck** at 110 feet on the deeper outer reef.

Sixty-eight miles beyond Key West, the Dry Tortugas are accessed only by plane or boat. Designated a national park, the more than 64,000 acres of Ft. Jefferson Park provide home to pristine coral reefs, abundant game fish and many species of migratory birds. The

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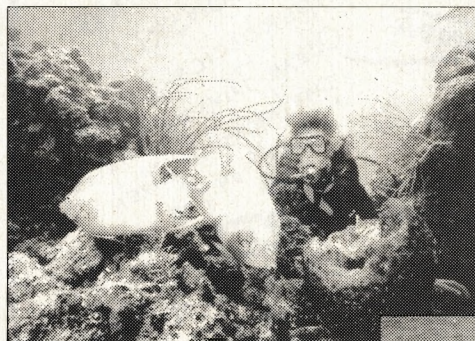
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mangrove islands of the Marquesas, another group of outer islands, mark the location of one of the biggest finds in salvaging history, the wreck of the **Atocha**.

Traveling down U.S. 1 away from Key West, the quiet beauty of nature again takes over. Big Pine Key is home to several refuges, one of which protects the last remaining 300 miniature Key deer. The Great White Heron Refuge and Key West National Wildlife Refuge, providing safe

haven for birds and nesting turtles, are accessible only by boat. One of the most popular sanctuaries, **Looe Key** covers 5.3 miles of pristine coral reefs, seagrass beds and sand flats. Named for the HMS Looe, a British frigate that sank in 1744, Looe Key boasts a healthy population of marine life. Beautiful Elkhorn and Staghorn Corals, massive Brain and Star Corals and profuse soft corals adorn the reefs and coral heads. Inhabitants range from crustaceans and invertebrates to large schooling fish, rays and eels.

MIDDLE KEYS: MARATHON. The "heart of the Keys" is bordered by the Keys' two

longest bridges, the famous Seven Mile Bridge to the west and the 2.5 mile Long Key Bridge to the east. Marathon, the area's most developed community, features several small shopping centers, a variety of motels, restaurants and marinas and a commuter airport. The Museum of Natural History of the Florida Keys, along U.S. 1, houses an exhibition on coral reef ecology as well as a nature trail.

Sombrero Reef's 142 foot light tower is a landmark of the Middle Keys. Offering a variety of diving depths and 25 mooring buoys, the site is popular with both divers and snorkelers. A dramatic natural formation on the east side, the **Archway** is adorned with plentiful coral and sponge growth. **Delta Shoals** is another popular snorkel/dive site, with the remains of an 1850s slaver ship scattered along the shallow depths. Known as the **Ivory Wreck**, the ship's hold once carried treasured ivory tusks. **Coffin's Patch** and **East Washerwoman**, with depths from 15 to 30 feet, feature the splendid Staghorn and Elkhorn Corals so prevalent in the Keys. Coffin's Patch also has its own forest of Pillar Corals on a small section of the reef.

The 189 foot **Thunderbolt**, placed at a depth of 112 feet in 1986, played dual roles as a wartime mine planter and later as a research vessel. Considered one of the best wrecks of the Keys, the ship is well encrusted with coral and sponge growth, attracting large Barracuda, schooling Amberjacks and, occasionally, sharks. In shallower waters, near Duck Key, the remnants of an 1800s steamship called the **Boiler Wreck** are home to scores of angelfish, Trumpetfish and parrotfish.

UPPER KEYS: LONG KEY, ISLAMORADA, KEY LARGO. Heading north from the Middle Keys, the islands become more populated until you reach Key Largo, which has the densest concentration of dive shops, marinas and tourist accommodations. Key Largo attracts the bulk of the visitors as it is the first stop-off after Miami and also home to the popular off-shore state and national sanctuaries. In 1960, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park was established, creating the first underwater park in the U.S. In 1975, the area was expanded to include the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary, bringing the total area to 188 square miles, running 8.5 miles out from Key Largo and 21 miles along the shoreline. The park offers excellent shallow diving on beautiful coral reefs saturated with abundant marine life. It provides the usual park services: camping, canoeing, picnicking and boat rides. South of Key Largo are Plantation and Tavernier on Islamorada, a little less hectic and still graced by quaint buildings of the earlier part of the century.

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your first stop after leaving Marathon. With campsites right along the ocean, excellent snorkeling and extensive nature trails through mangrove shores, hardwood hammocks and dunes, Long Key is a naturalist's paradise. The next attraction is **Alligator Reef**, named for the **USS Alligator** warship that ran aground here in the 1800s. Marked by a light tower that dates to 1873, the active marine life on the spur and groove reef far outshines the meager remains of the ship. In contrast, the 287 foot **Eagle**, a freighter placed as an artificial reef in 1985, is a virtual playground for divers. The ship is intact, lying on her starboard side in 110 feet of water.

Just below Tavernier, **Conch Reef** is the chosen site for NOAA's Aquarius habitat, an underwater research laboratory. Nearby **Conch Wall**, one of the better drop-offs of the area, begins at 45 feet and slopes to more than 120, attracting pelagics such as sharks, Cobia and Eagle Rays. To the west lies a portion of the famous **Silver Plate** fleet, sunk in a 1733 hurricane while carrying gold and silver from Cuba to Europe. Their treasures long since salvaged, **El Infante** and the **San Jose** exist now as little more than ballast stones and a few timbers scattered along the reef, surrounded by angelfish, Sergeant Majors and schools of grunts and snappers.

From Spanish galleons we go to the more contemporary wrecks of the **Bibb** and **Duane**. Twin Coast Guard cutters placed as artificial reefs in 1987, these ships lie between 120 and 130 feet in an area that frequently experiences strong currents. While the clear water of the currents greatly enhances visibility, these wrecks are considered best suited for advanced divers. The **Duane** presents excellent photo opportunities with schooling Barracuda at the crow's nest and several heavily encrusted openings for framing divers. Nearby **Pickles Reef**, at 25 feet, makes a great second dive following the **Bibb** and **Duane**. The remains of another wreck, hardened masses of mortar resembling pickling kegs, is dispersed throughout the area.

Just inside the borders of the national sanctuary we find **Molasses Reef**, often described as the most beautiful in the preserve. With more than 25 mooring buoys and a 45 foot high tower, Molasses is easily identified and offers extraordinary snorkeling as well as diving. Depths begin at five feet and run as deep as 85 in areas such as the **Mini Wall**. The reef has all of the Keys' signature marine life—schooling grunts, snappers and Schoolmasters, hordes of Sergeant Majors, Green Moray Eels, Atlantic Stingrays, Nurse Sharks, Gray Angelfish and much more. At nearby **French Reef**, **Hourglass** and **Christmas Tree Cave** are fine examples of the labyrinthine structure of the area's coral

heads. The caverns shelter schools of glistening Copper Sweepers and, during the summer months, a shimmering assemblage of Silversides.

Many photographers claim the **Benwood** as their favorite dive. The feeding of Barracuda and Green Moray Eels has created a cast of ready made models. The **Benwood** sank following a collision during World War II and was dynamited to avoid a navigational hazard. Consequently, the remains are scattered far and wide in depths from 25 to 45 feet and offer an enormous habitat. At the **Elbow** you'll also find the remains of several 19th century

vessels heavily populated with life: the **City of Washington**, a schooner that ran aground in 1917; the **Civil War Wreck**; and the 752 ton steamer **Towanda**. But the Elbow's most famous attraction is the statue of **Christ of the Deep**, sometimes called Christ of the Abyss. One of the most photographed underwater structures, the bronze statue is secured on a concrete base in 25 feet of water, making it accessible to divers and snorkelers. The surrounding reef is resplendent with massive Brain Corals reaching to within 10 feet of the surface. Sharks and rays are frequently spotted in the area.



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To the north end of the park, **Carysfort Reef** is marked by a 112 foot high light tower. A trench running parallel to the reef separates the spur and groove formation into two distinct reefs. The second reef, with large coral heads, rises to within 35 feet of the surface. Large stands of Elkhorn and Pillar Corals are considered a photographer's delight and the site is the final resting place of the **HMS Carysfort**, which ran aground in 1770.

MIAMI/BISCAYNE BAY

When you arrive in Miami, there's no question you've left the laidback attitude of the Keys for the big city life. Miami bustles with action and energy, a hodgepodge of many cultures and flavors displayed in exuberant festivals, wild nightlife and neighborhood clutches. Home to a Grand Prix, massive film productions, artists' colonies and large financial corporations, Miami's cosmopolitan downtown is a sharp contrast to the swampland that originally covered this area. But, in small pockets of sanctuaries and preserves, the beauty of nature as it was more than 100 years ago still draws visitors. To the southwest lie the wetlands of the Everglades, with alligators, herons and endless sawgrass. And, along the coast is the 181,000 acre Biscayne

National Park, with coral reefs, mangrove lined islands and shallow waterways.

Miami leads the state in artificial reef programs, sinking everything from specially made modular units to jet airplanes. The projects of the Dade County Artificial Reef Program have been thriving with the aid of Miami's tropical climate and warm water temperatures. But, there are several favorite sites already provided by nature and closely resembling the colorful formations of the Keys. **Fowey's Reef**, marked by a large steel lighthouse, ranges in depth from 10 to 100 feet. Elkhorn Corals are a major attraction here along with abundant tropicals. **Pacific, Long, Brewsters** and **Ajax Reefs** are among those bordering the connection to Pennekamp Park.

With such an active artificial reef program, the wrecks and assorted paraphernalia tend to attract the bulk of the area's divers. The **Almirante**, one of Miami's first artificial sites, was placed 20 years ago at 130 feet. She was turned upside down by hurricane forces but still provides an outstanding dive. The **Blue Fire**, at 110 feet, is another vessel reconfigured by nature. The 175 foot steel freighter, separated along the hull, now offers divers additional penetration. Other deep sites include the **Deep Freeze**, a 210 foot transport vessel at 130 feet, and the **Orion**, a 118 foot steel tug.

Several of the sites established under

the artificial reef project are designed to accommodate continued expansion, such as the **Belzona Triangle**, established in 1991. The site includes three tugs ranging in size from 85 to 100 feet, as well as several large freighters, barges and a conglomeration of boulders, culverts, concrete pipes and grinders.

The most unusual and most publicized of Dade County's projects was the sinking of a Boeing 727 aircraft off Key Biscayne. Known as the **Spirit of Miami**, the 20 ton jetliner received extensive preparation for the event and was a true harbinger of the city's reborn spirit after the devastation of Hurricane Andrew.

FT. LAUDERDALE/HOLLYWOOD

The Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood area has come a long way from its infamous association with the raucous spring break parties of the 1960s. Today's visitors range from the young to the old, with many seasonal tourists from Canada and Europe. Long popular for its beautiful beaches, Ft. Lauderdale also offers high class resorts, an outstanding performing arts center, plentiful watersports and an abundance of open air restaurants lining the busy intra-coastal waterway. Hollywood is somewhat quainter, with a small town atmosphere and plentiful early 1900s architecture. Recreational parks and preserves protect much of the natural beauty of the beaches and mangrove waterways adja-

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cent to the intracoastal. Easily accessed shore diving is quite popular along the Dania and Hollywood beaches, especially during calm summer months.

Like many of Florida's prime diving locations, Broward County has an active artificial reef program and a well established mooring buoy system. With the occasional influence of the Gulf Stream, there's also the convenience of drift diving. The area features three basic reeflines: the shallow inside reef; a second reefline at 30 feet, with a 5 to 10 foot relief; and the third reef beginning at 45 feet and dropping to about 90 feet on the backside. Great snorkeling sites include **Barracuda Reef**, right off John U. Lloyd State Park, and the **Copenhagen** wreck near Pompano Beach. One of the area's most beautiful wrecks, the heavily encrusted remains of the *Copenhagen* still yield machine gun bullets. The steel hulled freighter ran aground in 1900 and her 30 foot grave is now marked by prolific sea life.

Through the efforts of the county's artificial reef program, a huge assortment of newer wrecks also lines the ocean bottom from Hollywood to Pompano Beach. The **Tenneco Towers**, placed in 1985, are former oil drilling platforms donated by the namesake company. The three towers are spaced 75 to 150 feet apart at depths ranging from 108 to 112 feet. Completely encrusted, the towers are a macro photographer's paradise as well as an attraction for plentiful schooling fish and pelagics. The 197 foot *Mercedes I* began its notoriety in Palm Beach, running aground during a 1984 northeaster. After spending months in a millionairess' front yard, the ship was freed and purchased by Broward for its artificial reef program.

The 240 foot **Jim Atria**, originally positioned on her side at 117 feet, was up-righted during Hurricane Andrew and sports a dense population of gorgonians and sponges. Other deep wrecks include the 175 foot **Captain Dan**, at 107 feet in the sand and the **Rebel**, a 150 foot freighter at 113 feet. Both wrecks attract many larger fish such as schools of Barracuda, Horse-eye Jacks and Amberjacks. One of Ft. Lauderdale's great attributes is the availability of shallow wreck sites for less experienced divers. The **J. Scutti** is a 95 foot Dutch harbor tug sunk in 1986. She's tied by a long, sponge encrusted hawser to the bow of the 95 foot sailboat **Pride**. Depths range from 45 to 70 feet. Lined up in a north-south direction are several wrecks, slightly deeper at 70 to 80 feet. The schooner **J. Dorman** is followed by an 85 foot schooner and the two **Qualman Tugs**. The proximity of these vessels is such that divers may cover all four in a single drift dive.

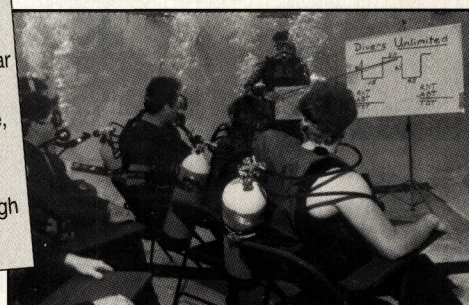
Ft. Lauderdale has its bounty of natural resources as well. The reefs of this area closely resemble those of the Keys, with

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* Per Rodale's Scuba Diving Magazine Readers Survey, Feb. '96 "Healthiest Reef in the U.S." © SD/AD 1995

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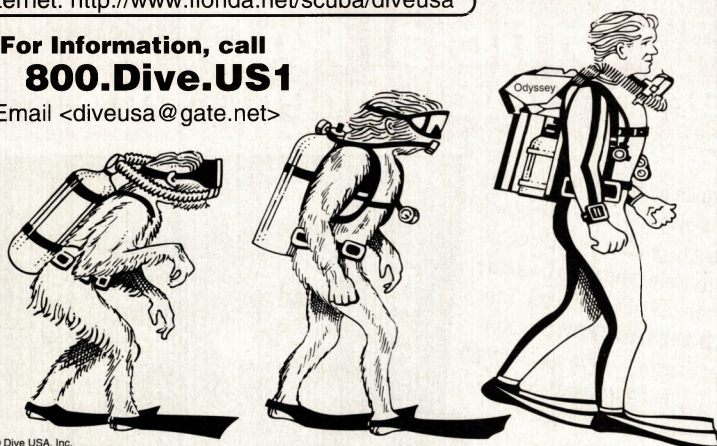
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slightly fewer hard corals and a preponderance of soft corals. Huge populations of schooling fish inhabit the shallow reefs and the coral heads feature small caverns, tunnels and overhangs. **Hammerhead Reef**, to the south, is a deep ledge attracting sharks, turtles and game fish. The set of double horseshoe ledges that make up **HoJo's** are well known for harboring crustaceans and invertebrates and, at 30 feet, perfect for less experienced divers. **Pompano Drop-off** is one of several sites where Pillar Corals have been establishing growth. At the northern end of the county, the shallow and midreef areas of **La Bonte**, **Abbey Too** and **Angling Pier** have dramatic relief and a healthy population of marine life.

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Along Palm Beach, the Gulf Stream comes closer to shore than anywhere in the continental U.S., bringing with it thousands of migrating creatures ranging from huge, full grown pelagics to tiny creatures in the first stages of growth. As you head north, you'll notice a transition to hard rock ledges with dramatic, almost primeval formations providing a base for the corals and sponges. The currents of the Gulf Stream also bring warm, clear waters and visibility sometimes exceeding 150 feet. When the stream moves away from shore, the nutrient rich waters of local estuaries seep through the inlet toward the reefs, providing a complementing component to the food chain. Although this influx of estuary water decreases visibility, it increases the opportunities for sightings of such exotic creatures as Whale Sharks and Manta Rays. Almost all Palm Beach diving is done by drifting with a float ball, the easiest way to flow with the currents.

One of this coastline's most endearing animals is the sea turtle. Loggerhead, Green and Hawksbill Turtles are the most common species found here, although Leatherback Turtles have also been sighted. Although these creatures are year-round residents, their populations soar in the summer months as the females head



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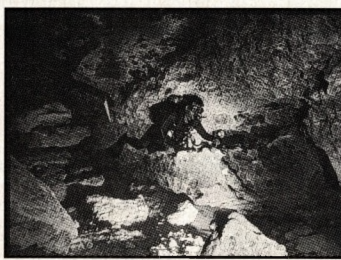
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for shore to lay their eggs.

Southern Palm Beach County marks the dramatic transition in the reefline with **Delray Ledge**, a 50 to 65 foot reef featuring huge overhangs draped in sponges and gorgonians and filled with schooling grunts and snappers. **Shark Reef**, so named for occasional sightings of Bull and Reef Sharks, is a well defined 60 foot formation with plentiful soft corals on top. The **Delray Wreck** at 22 feet and **Jap Rock** to the south, at Boca Raton, are both great for novices and snorkelers.

At **Lynn's Reef** there is a stretch of honeycombed 50 to 60 foot reefs rich with tropicals, crustaceans and eels. **Paul's Reef**, divided by sand patches, ranges from a low, straight ledge to larger mounds etched with caverns and minicaves. Here you'll find turtles, Nurse Sharks, lobsters, huge Midnight Parrotfish and schools of Copper Sweepers. Similarly, **Horseshoe Ledge** has plentiful marine life filling its ledges, caverns and honeycomb holes.

The **Teardrop** is a low profile reefline that leads to a series of ledges in the Breakers chain. The continuous reef becomes **South Ron's**, then **Ron's Rock** at a large overhang known to shelter Jewfish and Nurse Sharks. From there divers cross a sand patch to **North Ron's** (also called **Flower Garden**) that eventually leads to the Breakers proper. At the north end of the Breakers, called the **Hook**, another large ledge is a favorite hangout for sharks, groupers, Jewfish and turtles. From here, it's a short drift to the **Turtle Mound**, where you'll see turtles, large rays, octopus and schooling grunts and snappers.

The **Mizpah** and **Amayllis** are favorite wreck dives off Palm Beach. Both have been down more than 20 years, accumulating so much growth that only the outline gives a clue as to what's underneath. You can drift from one to the other at depths ranging from more than 90 feet to less than 80.

Nearby are several wrecks placed more recently as artificial reefs. The **Owens Triangle**, established in the mid 1980s, includes the 125 foot *Eidsvag* freighter, a large barge and a Rolls-Royce automobile. Large schools of Barracuda gravitate to the *Eidsvag*, hanging motionless near the ship's rails. At times you'll find Green Moray Eels and large groupers. The largest of the area's wrecks is the **Princess Ann**, sunk in 1993. The 350 foot passenger ferry is in an area with frequent strong currents and is recommended only for experienced divers.

The reefs become even more rugged and unpredictable north of Palm Beach, seeming to attract an even wilder array of animals and offering drift divers challenging and exciting dives. **Frank's Snapper Reef** is a double ledge ranging from near-

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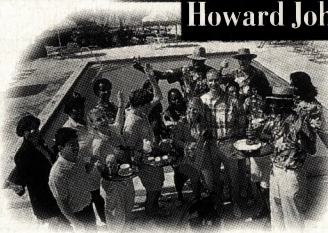
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ly 100 feet at the lower ledge to 65 on the higher rim. Potholes full of lobster, overhangs harboring groupers and snappers and the deep ledges with Blacktip and Bull Sharks make this a spectacular dive. **Juno Ball** and the **Jupiter High Ledge** offer the highest profiles along this coast. Sightings here typically include Manta and Spotted Eagle Rays, turtles, sharks and a variety of groupers.

Ft. Pierce, home of the giant lobsters, is also home to a giant wreck, the **USS Rankin**. More than 450 feet long, she rests on her side at 120 feet, with the main deck at 80 feet. Other favorites are the **Halsey**, the **Amazon** and the **Gulf Pride**, all with healthy populations of fish and invertebrates. Several Ft. Pierce sites carry less than refined titles. **Toilet Bowl Reef** is so named for the many porcelain jewels dumped in the area and **Tire Reef** began with the sinking of old tires, school buses and barges.

FLORIDA'S SPRINGS

In many pristine settings throughout central and northwestern Florida you'll find beautiful, crystalline springs gurgling from Florida's extensive freshwater aquifer. Forced through weak points in the soluble limestone base by hydrostatic pressure, the water is technically distilled as it rushes toward the surface, producing sparkling clear pools of varying sizes and configurations. In many areas, the passageways followed by the water are interconnecting labyrinths of tunnels and caves traveling back into the earth for miles. Each spring area is unique, not only in the formation of its caverns and caves but also in the surrounding countryside. Some are tucked away deep in primeval woods while others are grass bordered attractions in state parks. All share a constant water temperature, generally in the mid 70s (°F). During Florida's rainy season, it's a good idea to check on the status of the springs before visiting, as overflows from adjacent tannin filled rivers occasionally make the springs undivable.

Throughout central Florida these ancient springs and their rivers have yielded bones of prehistoric mammals and Indian artifacts hundreds of years old. The more than 300 springs spanning the upper portions of the state appeal to a wide range of visitors, from families on weekend outings to archaeologists, recreational divers and serious cave divers. It cannot be stated strongly enough that cave diving should only be attempted by those who have completed a certified cave diving course and are carrying the special safety equipment required.

One of the best times you'll ever have is

diving or snorkeling with the West Indian Manatee in **Crystal River**. Now protected in sanctuaries around the springs, these adorable creatures have had a difficult time in recent years, succumbing to power boats and overdevelopment of habitat. From November to March, they flock to the warmer spring waters, escaping cool temperatures along the coast. Local dive shops offer guided tours during this time, providing educational lectures about the Manatee. **King Spring**, along Banana Island, is the most frequented at Crystal River and also provides great diving during summer months. Dropping 30 feet, the spring leads to two caverns that continue another 50 to 60 feet. You'll also find Manatees at nearby Homasassa Springs State Wildlife Park, where orphaned and injured animals are rehabilitated and reacclimated before being released.

Moving north from Crystal River to Williston you'll find two large and very popular attractions. **Devil's Den**, a 200 foot basin entered through a dry cave, has a 60 foot spring and has produced many remains of extinct animals and humans dating back to 7500 BC. Nearby is **Blue Grotto**, another commercial operation with a natural sink reaching 110 foot depths.

High Springs, near the heart of the state, is surrounded by a treasure trove of springs. At **Ginnie Springs**, you'll find complete diving, camping and canoeing facilities along the Santa Fe River. There are actually six springs here, the largest being the Ginnie basin with an 18 foot cavern opening to a large sloping room 60 feet deep. **Devil's Ear**, **Devil's Eye** and **Little Devil's** are a short walk from the main spring and from these you may follow the river flow to **July Spring**, then back to the main spring. The nearby Ichetucknee River also has several springs along its tree lined banks.

The interior of Florida features enormous old oak trees draped with Spanish moss, towering pines and thick palmetto scrub. Protected areas, such as the Peacock Slough, ensure this natural beauty will remain pristine for generations to come. **Peacock Springs** has picnic facilities and supervised diving and there are several other springs within the park. Nearby **Troy Springs**, along the banks of the Suwanee River, holds the remains of a Civil War wreck.

Vortex Spring and **Morrison Spring**, in the Panhandle, are commercial operations offering dive services and picnic facilities for visitors. Vortex features a 200 foot pool, 50 feet deep, and an U/W platform for instructional use. Morrison has a run to the beautiful Choctawatchee River.

FLORIDA'S PANHANDLE

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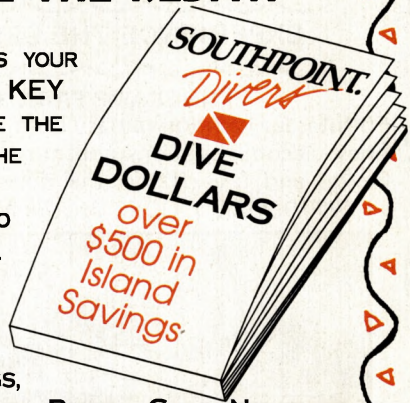
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FLORIDA

Florida's Panhandle is a cornucopia of delights: southern mansions grace antebellum Tallahassee; modern day amusement parks attract vacationers to Panama City; and the dense wildlife preserves speak of Florida's untamed past. Soft, white sand beaches—some of the most beautiful in the world—bordered by mounds of sea oat covered sand dunes and sparkling, emerald green waters, define much of the coastline of Florida's Panhandle. Enormous herons walk the dunes and shore, dolphins frolic in the shallows and the calm sea provides a fine horizon for the stunning sunsets.

Dive sites along the Panhandle are quite different from the southern portion of the state, with a predominance of rock ledges and an obvious green tint to the water. The Gulf Stream loops close to shore, bringing warm waters and a plethora of migratory species from as far away as the Yucatan. Dive conditions are best during the summer months but winter may bring larger animals, such as Manta Rays and Whale Sharks, and is also considered ideal for hunting on the deeper reefs. Visibility usually ranges between 40 and 80 feet and currents are variable. Additional protection is needed in winter as water temperatures dip well below summer's warm 80s to a possible 68°F.

The wealth of wrecks, sunk both purposefully and by acts of nature, begins at Port St. Joe with the **Empire Mica**. One of the largest tankers of her era, the 465 foot vessel sits in 110 feet of water, home to huge schools of baitfish and large Amberjacks. Along Panama City, an active artificial reef program has placed a number of exciting wrecks, as well as sections of the dismantled **Hathaway Bridge**, all now sporting healthy encrustations and attracting large schools of fish. Hordes of glistening baitfish surround the 200 foot **Chippewa**. Other great wrecks include the **USS Strength** and the **Chickasaw**. A new addition is a 100 foot **Hovercraft** donated by the Navy, placed at 75 feet. **Mr. Happy**, one of Destin's most prolific wrecks, remains intact and thriving. Pensacola is also home to several famous wrecks, the most renowned being the **USS Massachusetts**, with gun turrets exposed above the waterline and 75 years worth of encrusting growth along her sides.

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PADI's Improve Your Scuba: Wreck Diving

Learning to Dive the Ocean's Time Capsules

BY TAMARA L. COLLINS

A black and white image of a massive ship appears on the screen in letterbox; a soothing, articulate voice speaks of the sinkable nature of ships; the camera follows a sinking giant as it slips beneath the waterline. From the beginning, the quality of *Wreck Diving*, PADI's sixth video in the Improve Your Scuba series, is apparent. The introduction prepares viewers to be entertained and visually stimulated while learning the procedure for safely diving the ocean's wrecks.

Wreck Diving's main emphasis is clear—diver safety, first and foremost—but the video also deals with the issues of wreck diving laws, the etiquette of artifact removal and the hazards divers present to resident marine life. Armchair students are first advised to learn the laws governing the particular wreck they wish to visit and then evaluate the wreck's hazards. The student is taught the basics of navigation, the special conditions of diving deep wrecks and those of diving a wreck in strong currents. The video also points out the value of researching a wreck's history and the skill of mapping so you can return to an interesting site with ease.

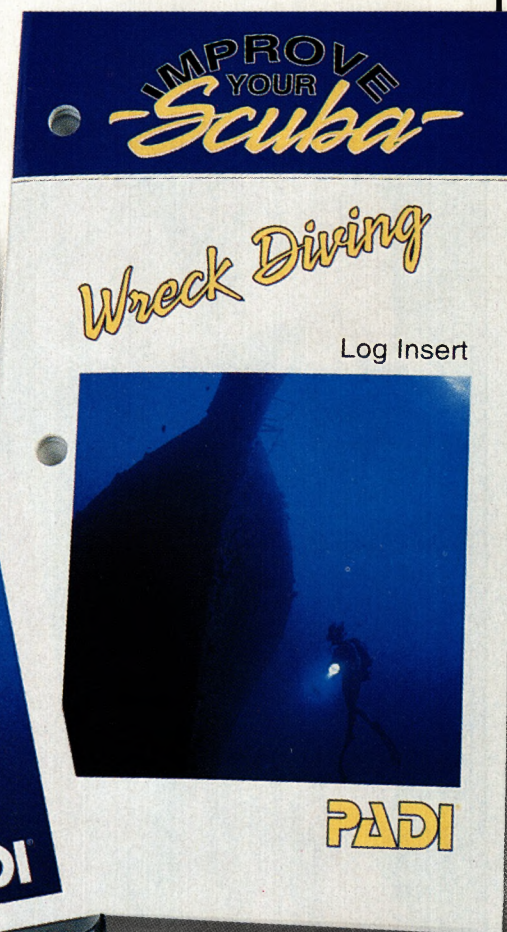
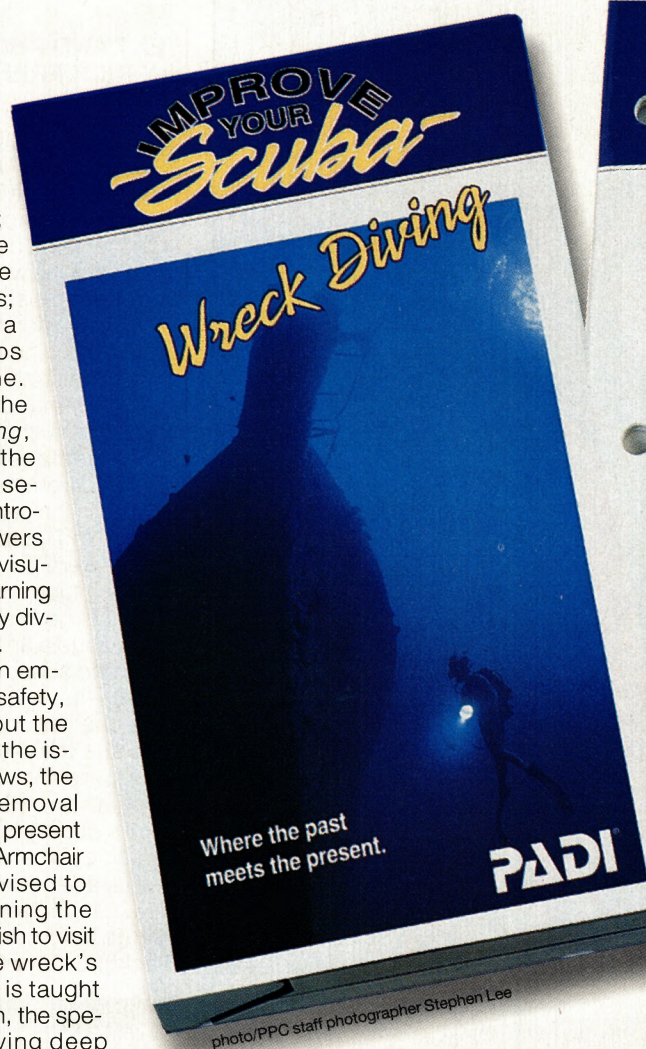
Filmed mostly in the clear, blue waters of the Caribbean, a good portion of the video is spent on the subject of wreck penetration—the activity that presents the most hazards. PADI's divers act out a number of penetration procedures and scenarios, illustrating the proper use of penetration equipment, including a line

and reel, an alternate air supply and back-up light sources. The procedures to follow in the case of special and emergency situations, such as limited visibility owing to silt and light failure, are also covered.

Venturing into the ocean's time capsules can be a challenge and to do it safely divers need the proper training and education. When used in conjunction with the PADI Wreck Diver Specialty course, *Wreck Diving* is an excellent tool to prepare divers of any skill level to safely and conscientiously explore sunken

ships, planes and automobiles. Included with the 40 minute, closed captioned video is a Log Insert booklet that outlines the main points of the video for quick reference. The insert is hole punched so it can be kept in your PADI logbook binder.

For more information on PADI's *Wreck Diving* video (\$32.50) or to find out more about the other videos in the Improve Your Scuba series, call (800) 729-7234, fax (714) 540-2609 or write to PADI at 1251 East Dyer Road #100, Santa Ana, CA 92705. 🐠



PADI's Improve Your Scuba *Wreck Diving* video and Log Insert booklet present the procedures for safe wreck exploration.

Belize's Blackbird Caye



An eruption of yellow sponges appears to hypnotize a diver at Sponge Canyons. Below: Blackbird Caye Resort nestles amid an effusion of tropical green.

Turneffe Islands Retreat Offers Pristine Diving

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICK FREHSEE

Fruitful and abundant, fruitful and abundant. These two words kept passing through my mind as I surveyed the underwater scenery. **Coral Garden** was the name of the site and a perfect description as well. Fingers of coral meandered across a field of snow white sand, occasionally exploding into tall spires and pinnacles. One was a twin spire of perfectly formed Pillar Coral—a particularly majestic and sometimes rare species in much of the Caribbean.

Soft seafans in purple and pastel sprouted from the tall coral heads and swayed in the gentle swell. Bursts of hot colors—red, purple, pink, green and orange—were provided by rope, finger, vase and tube sponges. Other sponges formed huge basket and barrel shapes, some double and even triple barreled. Coral and schooling fishes were everywhere—here a pair of Hog Snappers, there one-half dozen Gray Angelfish and here and there schools of Mahogany Snappers, Bermuda Chubs, Yellow Goatfish and Blue Tangs. At several points during the dive we were confronted by what seemed to be an endless parade of Creole Wrasse. This reef, only 20 to 25 feet deep and a short, five minute boat ride north of the dock at Blackbird Caye Resort, was a perfect



Resort

metaphor for fruitful abundance.

"This is not your average vacation; this is an adventure," is the statement made on a Blackbird Caye T-shirt. "This is also an education," would complete the message as this is more than your average dive resort. Blackbird Caye Resort, on the eastern side of Turneffe Islands Atoll, Belize, is a combination marine research station and dedicated dive resort. Well positioned to access many miles of pristine wilderness reefs and walls along the sizable atoll, it is also a place of peace, conservation and physical and mental renewal. Belize, a country of diverse and abundant wilderness, presents an off-shore environment that includes 170 miles of nearly continuous barrier reef, more than 150 cayes and three unique coral atolls. These atolls, essentially a ring-like formations enclosing a central lagoon, are found only in this area of the western Caribbean. Actually, they are unique in this hemisphere.

Turneffe is the largest of Belize's three offshore atolls and the one closest to shore. It is 30 miles long with a maximum width of 10 miles and an area of a little more than 200 square miles. Turneffe is unique in that the 30 or so islets are mostly mangroves—a significant marine habitat and juvenile nursery. The well-formed offshore reefs include 46 species of hard corals, numerous sponge species and an unusual abundance and diversity of marine fishes. Although infrequently dived, there are 70 known sites around the outer fringe of the atoll. Blackbird Caye, on the windward side of Turneffe, can access many of these quality dive sites and is home to considerable above water natural habitat. The caye is roughly 4,000 acres, the largest island in the atoll, and about 32 miles east of Belize City.

After arrival at the Phillip Goldson International Airport just outside of Belize City, guests are greeted by Keith Slusher, the resort's transfer manager. From there you will drive directly to the dock for transport to the caye. (Occasionally, arrivals late in the day will overnight at a mainland hotel and boat transfer to Blackbird Caye early the next morning.)

The scenic boat trip takes about an hour and a half, first passing a series of offshore islands and then crossing

through the mangrove islets of Turneffe Atoll over to the eastern side. The first view of Blackbird Caye Resort is of the dock and a series of thatched roof bungalows. Soon after arrival and check-in you will meet dive operations manager Klaus Eiberle and instructor/biologist Sarah Christie. Both Klaus and Sarah found their way to Blackbird Caye via the marine sciences. Klaus arrived as a coral reef analyst aboard a research vessel; Sarah arrived after a two year stretch in The Bahamas working as a fisheries biologist. Both are, therefore, interested in combining the recreational and educational opportunities provided by the resort's diving and research setting.

As I was later to learn from Blackbird's eloquent owner, Ray Lightburn, the resort's research and recreational functions evolved side by side. Lightburn, a big Belizean with an even bigger heart, has been a union leader, a political activist (his grandfather took youngster Ray to a political rally and it is said that Ray never left) and a newspaper editor. After standing up to developers who planned to cut down large areas of mangroves and discovering that "fish do grow on

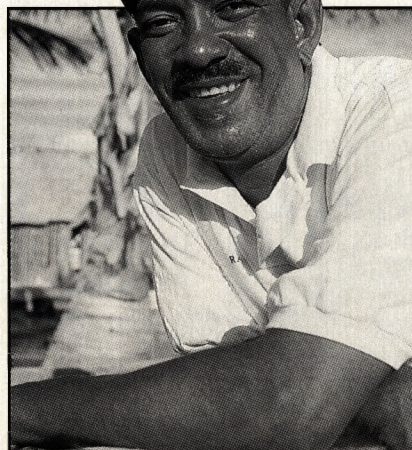
trees" (mangroves support many fish populations and provide an essential link in the reef food chain), Ray Lightburn became a very active conservationist. After a primary developer also became environmentally aware and educated, they formed a team that included Kent Leslie, the resort's manager, thus the Blackbird Caye project was born.

The island, the mangrove lined lagoon and virtually the entire reef system is basically wilderness, nearly untouched by human hands. This, combined with Blackbird Caye's relative closeness to Belize City, makes the resort a perfect location for exceptional recreational diving, appealing mainly to those ready for an environmentally conscious educational experience. It is also a perfect place for a research station for continuous and ongoing study. This is Blackbird Caye's combined destiny—to provide a unique and attractive island diving experience and to provide a station for marine research. Klaus and Sarah have their own ongoing interest in monitoring the health and growth of Turneffe's living reefs. Other research and educational organizations, such as the Oceanic Society, concentrate on wild dolphin research and evaluation as well as coral reef and mangrove research.

There is never a complete separation of Blackbird Caye's dual personality. Researchers often eat, socialize and occasionally dive with guests. Evening slide presentations, usually presented by Klaus and Sarah, highlight fish, invertebrate and coral identification and behavior. A major difference at Blackbird Caye Resort is that guests always receive a dose of marine education, information is freely shared and everyone is encouraged to ask questions.

Blackbird Caye Resort essentially is a group of mahogany cottages with thatched roofs perched on a white sand beach at the edge of the sea. The interiors are comfortable, spacious and supplied with electricity and hot water. The cottages are cooled by the trade winds via screened, louvered windows and overhead fans. The main building or eco-lodge is a handsome round wood building with a high peaked thatched roof. Inside is the restaurant and social lounge. The food, three meals a day plus coffee, drinks and snacks any time, is excellent. A combination of familiar and island cuisine emphasizing local fruit, vegetables and seafood is featured.

The boat dock provides a place for a small dive shop and wet storage locker. Natural construction and single story structures are a resort mandate. The most notable part of the land experience is the incredible natural beauty of the sprawling beach, vegetation and sea panorama, viewed anywhere from the



Right: Ray Lightburn, Blackbird Caye Resort's eloquent owner, is a big-hearted Belizean and an ardent conservationist.

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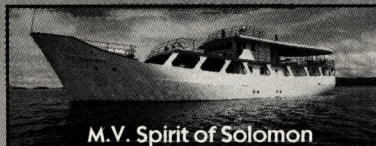
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BLACKBIRD CAYE RESORT

beach property. Many trees are tagged with signs denoting their names. A trail just north of the guest bungalows leads to a dock on the mangrove lagoon, where snorkeling adventures are easily launched. Below the mangroves is a maze of sponge-covered roots where fish, crabs, shrimp and others find refuge. The Turtle Grass bottom is home for hordes of *Casseopeia*, the upside-down jellyfish. Incidentally, the island is named for the great-tailed grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*), a crow-like blackbird with a melodious call.

The property includes 350 acres; the resort occupies 65 acres of beachfront. Our main dive boat for the week was *Baluum* (jaguar in Maya), a 26 foot wooden skiff powered by a huge outboard and a spare. A center tank rack, side seats and a rear boarding ladder make the boat comfortable for divers. There is a second mid-sized boat similarly equipped. The larger resort vessel, the 50 foot custom dive boat *Blackbird*, is used primarily for regular weekly day trips to Lighthouse Reef and the Great Blue Hole. *Blackbird* is also utilized to transfer groups to and from the island.

In addition to pristine coral gardens just inside the main reef, there is a nearly continuous wall that lines the outer reef. As a result, most of the dive sites, dozens of which are only minutes from the resort, are on or near a colorful wall. One spectacular site we visited was **Sponge Canyons**, in front of Little Calabash Caye, just five minutes south of the resort. Following a fissure over the wall, divers in buddy pairs proceed down and along the wall until reaching 1,500 psi. Then the divers head up through a channel in the wall, weaving their way through coral heads until arriving back at the boat. This is also typical of the resort's established profile. This site was particularly blessed with sponges of every size and description. Two huge Barrel Sponges rose from the sand bottom directly in the middle of our wall channel. Over the vertical wall we found more spectacular sponges, including a handsome Strawberry Sponge surrounded by a bouquet of Black Coral. On top of the wall were more huge Basket and Barrel Sponges, some taller than a diver. The similarity of the dive sites was evidenced mainly by the ever present wall; differences were apparent in the sponge, coral and fish populations. Surprises such as turtles, Eagle Rays and the occasional manta or shark are possible on any dive site. Healthy and prolific reef formations are the rule. Visibility can range from 80 to 150 feet.

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A recent addition to the excellent standard reef and wall itinerary is regular visits each week, weather permitting, to beautiful Lighthouse Reef and Halfmoon Caye. This all-day excursion features a deep dive in the incredible **Great Blue Hole**. Beneath its lip, divers will find the out of this world presence of huge stony stalactites, some 30 feet long. After lunch on a scenic caye, a dive is staged at **Halfmoon Caye Wall** or **Long Caye Wall**, two of the most visually spectacular drop-offs in all of Belize.



TACA has modern 767 and 737 aircraft and flies nonstop to Belize daily from the U.S. gateways of Miami, New Orleans and Houston, with immediate connections from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Belize travel specialist Paul Hunt has recently developed a series of high quality, price conscious dive packages for Blackbird Caye Resort. A special four night program, with Turneffe Islands diving, and a seven night program, including Lighthouse Reef and the Great Blue Hole, are available through 1996. These excellent packages include an exceptional itinerary with three dives per day (generally two morning and one afternoon or night dive), food, lodging, transfers and many extras such as a marine biology research lecture.

Call Betty Taylor today for complete details on Blackbird Caye Resort. The phone number is (713) 659-5144; fax (713) 658-0739. 🐟

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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK



photo/Stuart Cove

Capturing underwater images with a still or movie camera has been a significant attraction for both recreational and professional photographers visiting Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean. On the Bahamian island of New Providence, this famed dive operation recently hosted film crews for Universal Studio's theatrical release of *Flipper* (see SKIN DIVER, December 1995), as well as many other vintage movies such as the James Bond films *Thunderball*, *For Your Eyes Only* and *Never Say Never Again*.

Hollywood cameramen such as Jordan Klein and Pete Romano have turned to Stuart Cove because they know he can provide warm, clear water, easy access (there are multiple flights arriving in Nassau daily from many U.S. and international gateways), professional topside logistic support (including charter boats and knowledgeable staff) and, most of all, an underwater location with miles of

photogenic coral reefs, shipwrecks and walls. Stuart has also developed several amazing shark dives—few destinations in the world can offer a host of Caribbean Reef Sharks willing to work as extras for the kind of “scale” that comes from bloody fish bait!

I have traveled to Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean for my personal underwater photo projects as well. Stuart has helped me shoot editorial projects for SKIN DIVER and Esquire, as well as advertising projects for Nikonos cameras, a pharmaceutical company, a wetsuit manufacturer and a dive equipment company. In fact, the last time I was on New Providence working with Stuart was to photograph an underwater communications device known as the Buddy Phone.

The layout called for two divers doing something exciting but, beyond that, the client was open to suggestions. We first thought a shipwreck

might be a good backdrop for the photo and had scheduled our production team for a different destination. However, it was winter and the winds were wreaking havoc on water clarity throughout much of the Caribbean. Faced with the very real possibility of water so turbid quality images would be impossible, we considered another destination. Sharks certainly fit the requirement for excitement and I knew we could count on sharks with Stuart Cove. I phoned Stuart on Wednesday. He assured me the weather was perfect and the visibility, in excess of 100 feet. By 1:00 pm the next day we were underwater, surrounded by sharks.

At that point, however, we didn't know if the project was complete. That's where the newest addition to Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean came in—Fin Photo Center. With its quality processing of E-6 compatible film (Fujichrome, Agfachrome, Ektachrome), we knew on the same day that the images we sought were in the can and we could concentrate on other photo needs.

Let me preface my discussion of Fin Photo Center by acknowledging I am very fussy about my film processing. I was reassured just by looking at the lab configuration that this was a quality operation. The photo center was spotless. There was a brand new Jobo rotary tube processor with one-use unreplenished Kodak chemicals and a Kodak process thermometer. The latter may seem a small thing but an accurate thermometer means someone who knows and cares is in charge. That someone, at least in the start-up phase, is Steve Simonsen.



Stuart and Michelle Cove with two of their favorite companions.

Stuart and Michelle Cove decided they needed some professional insights to make sure their new underwater photo center was headed in the right direction, so they elicited opinions from those likely to know. In the very early stages, Nikon's Frank Fennell and I were on location testing some new camera gear and we were fortunate enough to share some thoughts about how the photo center might be laid out. Together with Stuart we sketched a design that included retail displays, camera rentals and video editing/playback facilities on the ground level. Upstairs there would be three separate classrooms with light tables, projection facilities and charging stations; guest camera storage lockers and Ilfochrome (aka Cibachrome) print processing from slides; and an E-6 processing lab.

Stuart closely adhered to these initial plans. Steve Simonsen, a talented and knowledgeable photo pro who resides on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands, was brought in as a consultant to make sure all operated at maximum efficiency. He has

worked very closely with the resident photo pro, Pam Chrisman, who now oversees a full range of photo services, including daily processing of E-6, custom video shoots with sophisticated editing capabilities, photo instruction, camera and video rentals and retail sales of photo related items.

THE DIVING

Dive South Ocean offers three different shark dives, each has its own appeal. At the **Shark Runway**, in proximity to the new shipwreck **Bahama Mama** and about a mile from the Dive South Ocean docks, a dozen or so Caribbean Reef Sharks are drawn to the scene by baitfish offered from a

polespear by staff members. This is one of my favorite sites for shark photography because it is shallow (40 to 50 feet), allowing ample bottom time, abundant light and heavy sand. This means once the sand gets stirred into suspension, as it inevitably will by rambunctious sharks and apprehensive divers, it settles quickly to clear the water. It also helps that a light current often washes this location.

At **Shark Wall**, Caribbean Reef Sharks are seen with such regularity that the first dive is often done without bait so divers can simply observe the natural behavior of these sleek predators. The high voltage encounter begins once the baitbox is brought to the scene. The divers are grouped in a semi-circle around the feeder in about 50 feet of water. Once everyone is comfortably situated, the circus begins! The bait is voraciously consumed



Above: Divers enjoy photographing feeding Caribbean Reef Sharks at Shark Runway. Below: Newly opened, the Fin Photo Center provides quality slide and print processing, instruction, gear rentals and retail sales as well as custom videos.



Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, next to the South Ocean Golf and Beach Resort, takes guests to reefs, wrecks and thrilling shark dives off New Providence Island.

by the frenzied, swirling sharks while Black Groupers, Yellowtail Snappers and Green Morays patrol the periphery, seeking an opportunity to dart in for any errant morsels. The seafloor here is dotted with high profile Star Coral heads punctuated by purple Stovepipe Sponges and seafans, all contributing terrific wide angle photographic appeal.

The **Shark Buoy** is different than any shark dive anywhere. Here, beneath a large buoy tethered in 6,000 feet of water, Dolphinfin, Rainbow Runners and schooling jacks typically reside. This steady supply of potential prey, amid countless miles of open ocean, attracts pelagic predators, most notably Silky Sharks. These are typically juveniles in the three to five foot range but there may be as many as a dozen and they are used to eating from the divemaster's hand. Water clarity is almost always stunning here and the sharks can be closely approached for impressive underwater



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**STUART COVE'S DIVE
SOUTH OCEAN**

stills and videos. Back at the photo center guests gather around the bank of high quality monitors to relive the underwater adventure. Not surprisingly, these videos become treasured mementos of one of sport diving's greatest thrills.

Of course, there is more to diving off the southwestern portion of New Providence than sharks. The deep oceanic abyss known as the **Tongue of the Ocean** comes near the island here, creating vertical drop-offs beginning in only 40 feet of water. Dozens of wall dives are regularly scheduled on the Dive South Ocean itinerary and, for those who prefer pristine shallow reefs, the broad expanse of **Southwest Reef** is hard to beat. Here patch reefs rise within just a few feet of the surface from a sandy bottom at 20 to 25 feet. Fields of Blade Fire Coral, punctuated by pristine Elkhorn and Brain Corals, provide refuge for schools of grunts along this picturesque reefscape. At **Goulding Cay** the predominant Elkhorn Corals rise so near the surface they are awash at low tide. When the seas are calm (as they normally are behind the protection of this small island) this is an incredible snorkeling site. And, at the shallow section of **Pumpkin Patch**, fish watchers will be rewarded with schooling Horse-eye Jacks, angelfish, Barracuda, parrotfish and a variety of groupers. Even wreck divers will have something to enthuse over, with the wrecks of the **Bahama Mama**, **Willaurie** and **Tears of Allah** all in 50 feet of water or less.

Of course, no dive/lodging package can be a success without significant contribution from the lodging half of the equation. In this regard Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean is well served by its affiliation with the South Ocean Golf and Beach Resort. This is a first class resort, comprised of 250 rooms with air-conditioning, direct dial telephones and cable color TV. A PGA rated 18 hole golf course is on the premises, as are two restaurants, two swimming pools, two bars and perhaps the greatest aesthetic appeal, 1,500 feet of powdery white sand beach. The dive shop is near the beachfront units but, no matter whether guests book rooms along the golf course or overlooking the sea, guest gear storage facilities, camera lockers and charging station at the new Fin Photo Center will add to the convenience.

During my most recent visit to the South Ocean Golf and Beach Resort there was a new level of enthusiasm and excitement among the staff, presumably attributable to the Winfair Group of Companies' acquisition of the property and the new management staff. Winfair is

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well respected in hotel management and has experience with other Caribbean properties, such as Grand Cayman's Treasure Island Resort. Its involvement with the South Ocean Beach property lends greater stability and financial resources to a traditional New Providence favorite and there is a new feeling of confidence and pride everywhere.

For more information or reservations at Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, call (800) 879-9832 or, on New Providence, (809) 362-4171 or phone/fax (809) 362-5227.

As a vote of confidence in the Fin Photo facility and the photo appeal of Southwest New Providence, the prestigious Nikon School of Underwater Photography has scheduled two courses here for 1996: April 20 to 27, taught by Frank Fennell and August 10 to 17, taught by Rick Frehsee. To book space in the Nikon Schools at Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, phone (800) 272-9122. 🐟

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For more information, contact Buoyancy Training Systems, Inc., at (206) 241-2634 or write to 236 S.W. 171st Street, Seattle, WA 98166. 🐟

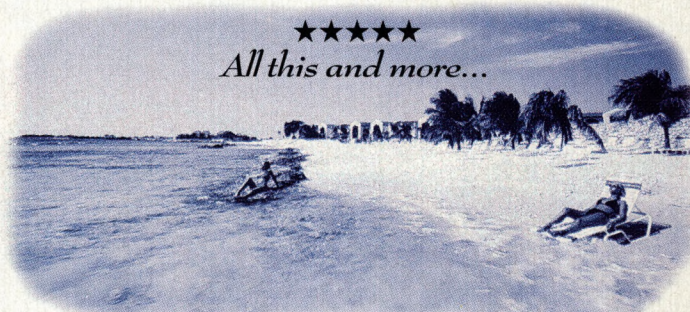
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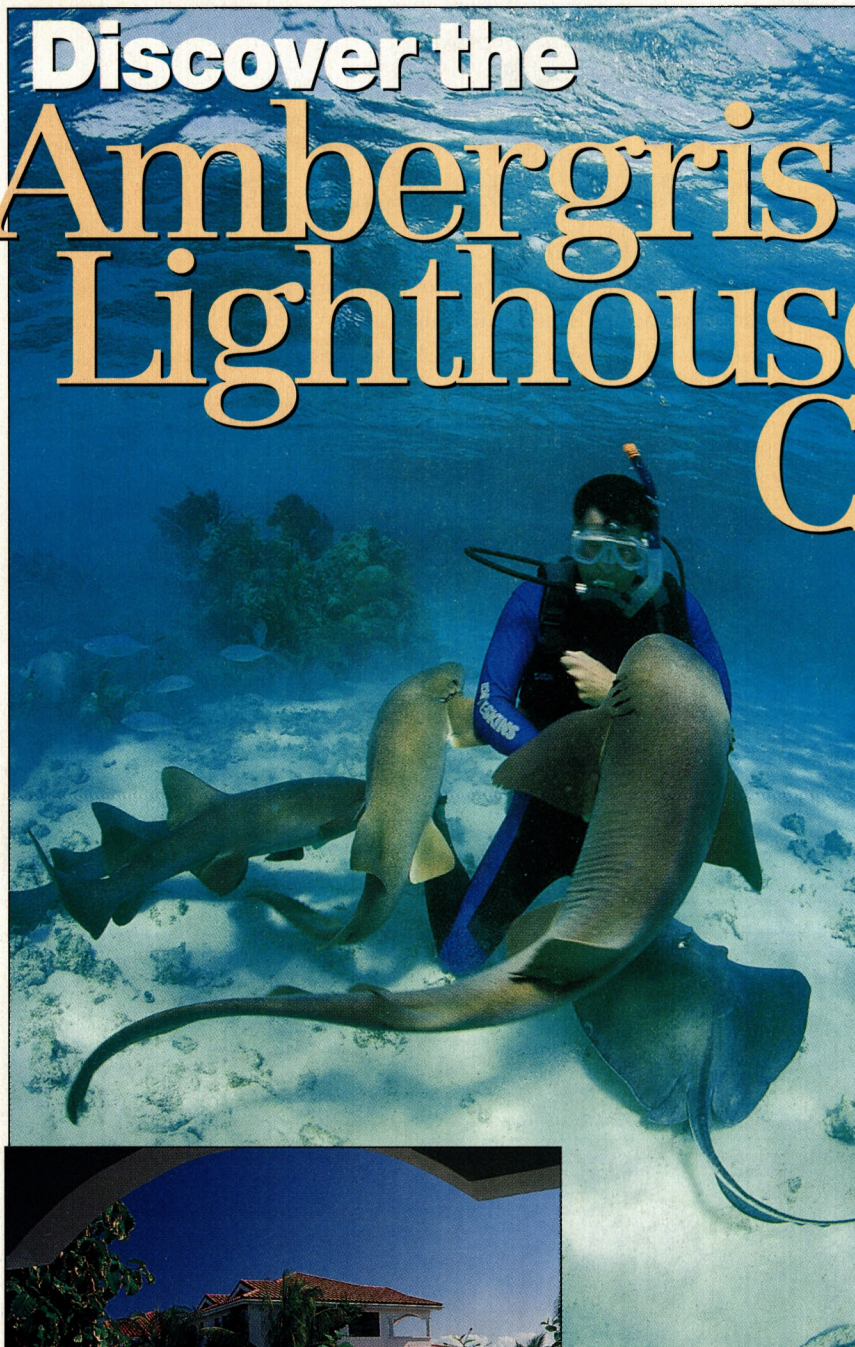
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**TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICK FREHSEE**



Above: A diver kneels in the sand at Shark Ray Alley surrounded by Nurse Sharks and Southern Stingrays—the hosts of a marine life encounter off Ambergris Caye.



Above: Beautifully landscaped grounds and a pool complement the Belize Yacht Club's apartment suites, which overlook the protected waters within the Barrier Reef. Right: The Belize Dive Center is headquartered at the club's docks. The full service operation offers instruction, rental gear and overnight excursions aboard the *Manta IV*.



On shore Belize is a small Central American country with an even smaller population. Most of the land, therefore, is wilderness, all reachable within a comparatively short time and distance. Offshore Belize is a different story. There is a lifetime of dive discovery and a universe of coral spread over 170 miles of dense barrier reef, three huge coral atolls and hundreds of coral fringed islands and cayes. All of this amounts to a coral world many times more extensive and complex than that of nearly any other dive destination in the Western Hemisphere. Assets, though, can also be liabilities. In the case of Belize, the question is: How do you possibly see it all?

Of course, you can't see it all, at least not in one visit. However, within a week's time, you can get a good cross section of what is available and, in the process, sample some of the most famous and pristine dive sites Belize has to offer.

The Belize Yacht Club/Belize Dive Center combo on popular Ambergris Caye offers the ideal Belize dive experi-

ence. You start out diving the barrier reef during two to three days of local diving; enjoying the comforts and amenities of the stylish yacht club. Then you transfer to the handsome *Manta IV* live-aboard for an overnight trip to the Turneffe Islands and Lighthouse Reef, including a dive in the Great Blue Hole and a stop at Half Moon Caye National Monument. By doing this you experience the barrier reef, the offshore atolls and the famous Blue Hole and return to the comfort-conscious resort at the end of your boat tour.

The Belize Dive Center, owned and operated by Gary "Gaz" Cooper, is a full service operation headquartered at the Belize Yacht Club docks. The logistical center of the operation is a white building decorated by the distinctive Eagle Ray logo and capped with a red tiled roof. The dive center houses instructional facilities, rental gear and a reception desk (there is a retail store near town). Fourteen full time employees, including six divemasters and boat captains, tend a fleet of mid-sized boats. Morning, afternoon and night dive trips access more than 25 different sites inside and outside the Belize Barrier Reef. Most of these sites are 5 to 20 minutes from the resort dock. Standard sites in-



Above: Gary "Gaz" Cooper is the enthusiastic owner and operator of the Belize Dive Center. Below: The vast Great Blue Hole at Lighthouse Reef Atoll is part of the *Manta IV*'s two day, overnight excursion.



clude **Mad M Caverns**, a series of enormous undersea canyons and swim-throughs; **Hol Chan Reef National Park**, a reef channel throbbing with fish life; and **Shark Ray Alley**, Ambergris Caye's newest and most exciting marine life spectacle. A sandy, shallow bottom is a theater for one-half dozen or more Southern Stingrays and as many, or more, Nurse Sharks that swirl around, inches from divers.

The Belize Yacht Club, on the ocean shore only minutes from the island's airstrip, is one of Ambergris Caye's newest and most beautiful resort/marinas. Fifty-five elegant and stylish apartment suites are clustered around a hand-

some freshwater pool, deck and manicured landscape. Each suite has a living room, full kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and porch or veranda. Each is air-conditioned and has a room phone. Currently there is a nice bar and breakfast/snack area. A full restaurant, upstairs/downstairs with inside bar, roof top bar and complete conference center for up to 160 people, is under construction. According to Wilhelm Hubner, the Belize Yacht Club and Marina general manager, the new restaurant will be open by the end of the summer. Presently this is not a restriction to in-

dividuals, families or small groups, as there is a wide selection of restaurants, pubs and eateries on the island.

Ambergris Caye is the popular fun center of offshore Belize. Formerly a sleepy fishing village of people of Maya descent, Ambergris has evolved into a laid-back cluster of local hotels, restaurants, gift shops and mostly dockside bars nestled along sandy streets, beaches and palm groves. Three intracountry airlines service Ambergris Caye from Belize City Municipal and International Airports with flights on the half hour and hour.

Belize Dive Center's specialty is the two day overnight excursion to the Turneffe Islands Atoll and Lighthouse Reef Atoll, in-

cluding the Great Blue Hole. This excursion is done aboard the 55 foot *Manta IV*, a classy and practical live-aboard. After a light breakfast at the dock, the group departs for the northern end of the Turneffe Islands. Known for abundant marine life, Turneffe is typified by sites such as **Rendezvous Point**, along the northwest side of the 30 mile long atoll. After the dive and a full breakfast, *Manta IV* heads to either the southern or northern quadrant of Lighthouse Reef for some of the best visibility and wall diving Belize has to offer. The northern tour includes an overnight docking at lovely Sandbore Caye. The southern route includes spectacular wall diving along **Half Moon Caye Wall** and **Long Caye Wall**. Overnight docking is at palm studded Half Moon Caye. Here you can visit the popular booby and frigate bird sanctuary. Guests will enjoy a barbecue dinner on the beach.

The next morning *Manta IV* heads for Belize's most famous and unique dive site, the yawning circular cavern of the **Great Blue Hole**. This magnificent spectacle, an ocean sinkhole 440 feet deep and nearly 1,000 feet across, was formed thousands of years ago during the last great Ice Age. Beneath the lip of the Blue Hole, on either the northern or southern side, divers will find huge 30 foot long stalactites in the emerald depths. It's an out of this world dive experience.

That afternoon, guests will return to the lively and colorful world of Belize's wilderness reefs, diving at western Lighthouse Reef and the eastern Turneffe Islands. Guests arrive back at the Belize Yacht Club around 5:00 pm. The offshore tour includes five spectacular wall dives, five excellent meals, soft

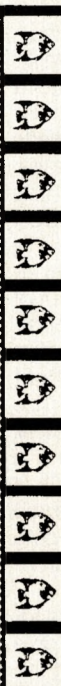


TACA has modern 767 and 737 jet aircraft and flies nonstop to Belize daily from the U.S. gateways of Miami, New Orleans and Houston, with immediate connections from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

drinks, snacks, tanks and weights.

A special consideration with Belize and Ambergris Caye is the many near island and mainland day tours available. These range from Altun-ha and river tours to a day trip to Caracol or Tikal, major Maya sites. Arrangements are easily made at the Travel and Tour Belize desk inside the lobby of the Belize Yacht Club.

For more information write to Belize Dive Tours, 2457 E. Commercial Boulevard, 2nd Floor, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308 or call (800) 938-0860; (954) 772-0737 (fax).



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TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 43)

circles. They move back and forth to some extent. The bottoms of wave forms, often referred to by divers as surge, push and pull objects back and forth. An object suspended in the orbit will move up, forward, down and back, ending up just about where it started. It is the forces generated by the wave form pushing against the rigid parts of a vessel that cause the less solid parts of the wreck to work loose, then fall. These can be a real hazard to those making penetration dives. Those contemplating a penetration dive, even if under excellent conditions, should pause for a minute or so and listen carefully to what the wreck and the ocean are telling them. An old, rusting, wave battered wreck can be a noisy thing. Loose steel plates, swinging doors, loose wire rope rigging and the living contents of the wreck will tell you the vessel's condition. Dive reports indicate the remains of the *Andrea Doria* are becoming noisy. Be careful in any wreck but beware of a noisy one.

The 1947 wreck of the *Diamond Knot* lies off Crescent Bay, Washington. The *Knot* has always been a great dive. There are many fish and most of the hull supports a heavy growth of anemones and other marine life. Many good external photo sites exist. Also, it always has been a wreck for experienced divers. Besides surge, strong alternate flood and ebb currents sweep through this wreck and add their power to tearing things loose. Divers have recently reported hearing the crash of large objects falling into the engine room and other parts of the stern. The presence of monofilament line and some nets and ropes add to the hazards. The *Diamond Knot* is still a big ship, lying on her side in 130 feet with 60 feet plus on the upper side. Great steel slabs were cut from her side during the salvage of several million dollars worth of canned salmon. Entry into the holds is relatively easy. It is potentially very dangerous to penetrate the after part of the vessel and engine room.

Here's another brief warning about wreck penetration that applies even to the easy ones with good visibility. Remember, currents change and there can be large variations in visibility. Often a change of current will bring water loaded with silt and near zero visibility. Any penetration into confined spaces where there is no direct access to the surface must be made only with approved equipment and procedures.

DIVING EMERGENCIES

At one time the suggested method of handling a dive injury or other dive emergency was: "Go to the nearest chamber." Then there were only a few hundred recreational divers. Now there are millions of recreational divers and hundreds of commercial divers. The Divers Alert Network (DAN) was established more than a decade ago. It has a sound, satisfactory system for handling dive emergencies. DAN is in University Tower, Suite 1300, 3100 Tower Boulevard, Durham, North Carolina 27707-2555 and is an affiliate of Duke University Medical Center. The 24 hour diving emergency telephone number is (919) 684-8111. The medical and general information number is (919) 684-2948, (919) 490-6630 (fax). Use the general information number except for actual emergencies.

DAN does not provide chamber locations. There are many reasons for this. There are only a small number of hospitals equipped with hyperbaric chambers for bends treatment. Many hospitals with chambers are not equipped to treat diving emergencies on a 24 hour a day basis. Even with an emergency call-out system, it takes time to assemble an adequate staff to handle a diving emergency. Most hospitals require a DAN or physician referral before accepting a dive injury transfer. Chambers may be in use or inoperative. And, importantly, the status of chambers can change from day to day and from hour to hour.

The following is DAN's guideline for a dive emergency. The immediate steps to take are:

- Establish Airway, Breathing and Circulation—ABC.
- Give 100 percent oxygen.
- Contact local EMS at 911 for transfer to hospital.
- Call DAN at (919) 684-8111.

Divers interested in acquiring additional information on handling dive emergencies are urged to contact DAN at the above address or telephone number. Become a supporting member and receive DAN's publication Alert Diver.

SKIN DIVER BACK ISSUES

For divers trying to find back issues of SDM a new batch has become available. Jim Pearson, Cinema Rentals, Inc., has a collection of nearly all issues from 1985 to 1992. Write or call Jim direct for complete information. The address is 6456 Wilkinson Avenue, North Hollywood, California 91606; telephone (818) 760-3966 or fax (818) 760-3067.

Divers interested in additional information about wrecks, or in need of other diving information, should write to Technifacts, c/o SKIN DIVER Magazine, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515. 🐠

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XANADU UNDERSEA ADVENTURES

(Continued from Page 73)

available to nitrox certified divers and International Association of Nitrox and Technical Diving (IANTD) instruction is available for those who want to investigate the advantages of enriched air.

Xanadu Undersea Adventures has three dive boats that allow them to spread divers out and avoid crowding. The three boats also give them a lot of flexibility in choosing dive sites. *Adventure One* is one of the legendary #1 Manufacturing Company boats built in Key West. Solid, fast and comfortable, this boat gets you to most sites in less than 25 minutes. It is set up for a maximum of about 15 divers, which leaves plenty of room for equipment and people. You can choose whether you want to sit in the shade or sun and the wide benches in front of the tank racks let you stay seated while you put on your tank. In between dives the Xanadu staff will set your gear up on a fresh tank. The open transom allows easy exit to the dive platform and a big ladder makes the climb back aboard a piece of cake.

Islander is a 35 foot boat used for groups of 10 to 12 divers. Cruising speed is about 12 knots, which gives an easy, jolt free ride. *Islander* also has a low freeboard at the stern, making back roll entries comfortable. The third boat, *Cara Mia*, is a 30 foot Intrepid with a pair of husky outboards. Used for smaller groups and special charters, *Cara Mia*'s deep V-hull gets to the more remote dive sites quickly and in comfort, opening up dives such as **Gold Rock**, toward the east end of the island.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Courtesy pick-up and drop-off is provided to all of the Freeport area hotels, so you can dive with Xanadu regardless of where you stay. However, Xanadu Undersea Adventures is next to the Xanadu Beach Resort and the proximity of the dive shop to your room can be an advantage. If that kind of convenience appeals to you, the Xanadu complex is the only place on Grand Bahama where the dive operation and the hotel are together.

The Xanadu Beach Resort was once owned by recluse billionaire Howard Hughes, who occupied the penthouse suite of the 12 story Tower Wing. The rooms in this section all have balconies and views of the pool, the marina or the beach. Forty-four of the Tower's 138 rooms are large, one bedroom suites, complete with walk-in closets. On the other side of the pool and tennis courts is the Cabaña Wing, a three story building with another 48 rooms. Most of the hotel, including the bar and restaurant,

has recently been renovated and updated. All of the rooms have air-conditioning and cable television.

Xanadu beach has gorgeous white sand, surrounded by palm trees and a straw market. Deepsea fishing, parasailing, jet skiing and other watersports are also available on the resort property.

DIVING WITH XANADU

When Dave gives the dive brief for **Xanadu Shark Alley**, he asks you to kneel on the sand and keep your hands at your sides. Although this does help prevent the sharks from making any mistakes about what is food and what isn't, it's mostly to keep you from being tempt-



Xanadu staff members from left: Vince Britton, Dave Burroughs, Mrs. Louis Chan, Shanna Kemp, Sean Adderly, Kieron Baudains, Dale Burroughs and Louis Chan.

ed to stroke the sharks as they swim by. If the thought of being that close to sharks makes you nervous, don't worry. The Xanadu shark dive is definitely not a feeding frenzy and no guest has been injured in any of the hundreds of dives completed during the last six years. This is a chance to see up to two dozen wild sharks cruising and feeding in a controlled event. Three or four big Black Groupers always turn up at feeding time. They hover over the sand in their lightest coloring, ignored by the sharks and hoping to snatch a bit of food.

Pygmy Caves is a 60 to 75 foot dive on a reef with parallel coral spurs that rise 15 to 20 feet from the bottom. Graceful Spotted Eagle Rays are often seen gliding along the valleys between the spurs. In places the corals have overlapped, creating swim-throughs. Reef fish are abundant here, including Honeycomb Cowfish and Spotted Morays. Octopus and Banded Coral Shrimp can often be seen if you look carefully under the ledges.

The reef is about 55 feet deep at **Blair House**, where an unusual network of holes angles downward another 10 or 20 feet. The holes are about four feet in diameter and take several minutes to swim through. You may meet a sleeping Nurse Shark or Green Sea Turtle on the way, so be prepared.

Theo's Wreck is a great dive—the perfect adventure for your first deep wreck. Sunk in 1982 specifically as a dive

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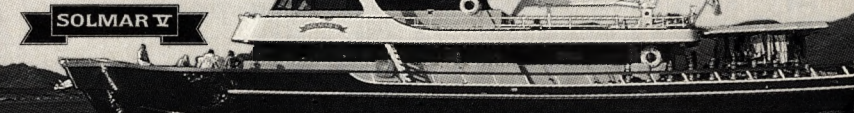
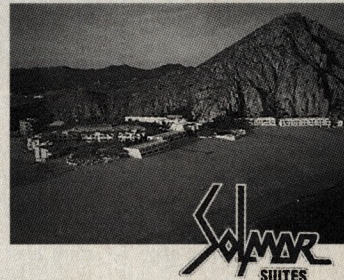
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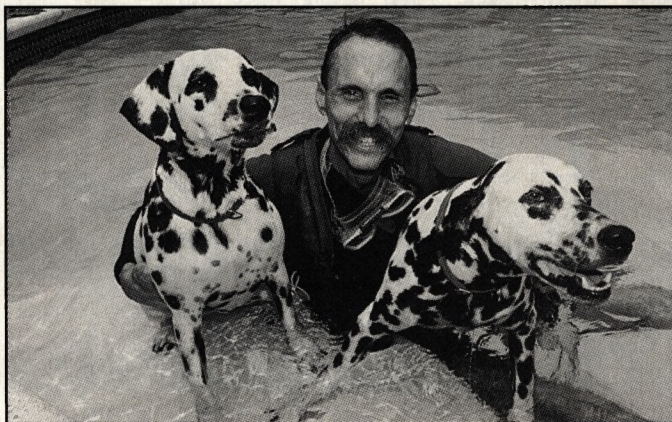
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XANADU UNDERSEA ADVENTURES

site, this 238 foot freighter rests on its port side in about 100 feet of water, with the stern only about 100 feet from the lip of the wall. The top of the starboard side tops out at about 75 feet. *Theo's* wreck was carefully cleaned and prepped for divers before it was sunk, so it's easy to penetrate. There are lots of fish, including schools of fast swimming jacks and some huge Midnight and Blue Parrotfish. Two big Green Moray Eels, nicknamed Pickles and Rambo, come out to greet almost every group of divers, sometimes following them around.

Another favorite wreck dive at Xanadu Undersea Adventures is the *Jose*, a 70 foot ocean going tugboat that has been on the bottom for about 10 years. This wreck sits among the coral heads, partially propped up by them. The proximity of the wreck and the reef attracts many fish, including some large Nassau Groupers and a resident school of Gray Snappers. This is also another area frequented by Spotted Eagle Rays.

Since new adventures are the hallmark of this trip, be sure to make arrangements to visit **Gold Rock**. This is an interesting dive from the surface right down to 60 feet. It starts with beautiful, golden brown branches of Elkhorn Coral almost reaching up to break the surface. Between 20 and 40 feet deep, a section of the reef sometimes referred to as the buttress zone, globes of Smooth Brain Coral and mounds of Star Coral and Giant Star Coral dominate the seascape. Since Gold Rock is protected as part of The Bahamas National Parks system, the area is thick with fish.

For a night dive or an afternoon dive when you want to stay shallow, **Silverpoint Reef** is an interesting spot. This is a big, oval shaped reef surrounded by sand. There is an even combination of hard and soft corals, including some nice branching Elkhorn and Antler Corals. The fish life attracted to this reef is amazing. A wide variety of snappers, jacks, angelfish, grunts, wrasse and morays can all be seen on a single dive. Colorful Flamingo Tongues are easy to find, as are Spanish Lobster. During the day, you can usually count on seeing at least one Southern Stingray buried in the sand as you swim around the perimeter of the reef. **Pinder's Point Reef** has a similar profile and, like Silverpoint Reef, will probably have you leafing through a coral reef ID book trying to identify something you've never seen before.

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ship or make the short hop by air from Miami or Ft. Lauderdale. A passport is recommended but a birth certificate with a photo ID will be accepted for U.S. citizens. The Bahamian dollar and the U.S. dollar are equal. Don't be surprised if your change is given in the more colorful Bahamian currency and, yes, those \$3 bills are genuine! The electricity is the same 115 volt/60 cycle standard as in the U.S., so charging batteries or using hairdryers is not a problem.

Driving is done on the left hand side of the road, which can be somewhat confusing since the cars also have left hand steering. After a few minutes you'll get the hang of it but watch out for those traffic circles!

The summer temperatures range from the mid-90s (°F) during the day to the high 70s at night. During the winter the daytime temperatures are a more moderate 75°F or so, normally dropping to about 65°F at night. Casual dress is the rule but you won't be out of place if you dress up for the better restaurants and casinos. Swimsuits and very short shorts should be reserved for the beach or boat. There is no official time zone change from the East Coast but be prepared to go from whatever time zone you started in to Island Time. You don't change your watch, you just stop looking at it so much!

Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures can make all the arrangements for this exciting Bahamas trip for you. Just call (800) 327-8150 and you will get you the best rates for travel, accommodations and diving, including the Discovery Cruise. You can also fax (305) 462-4100 or write to P.O. Box 21766, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33335.

NEKTON PILOT

(Continued from Page 58)

or cramped quarters. I've yet to see anyone feel the slightest queasiness on the *Nekton Pilot*—and probably never will! At times, the ride is so smooth you don't realize the boat is moving. And, as for space, this boat has it all over the conventional designs. The 40 foot wide vessel is divided into three levels—sundeck with spa and shaded area, two enclosed decks with dining room and salon and 17 cabins, all with picture window ocean views. The lower level leads to the dive deck and, of course, beneath the boat is the dive site!

Upon arrival at the *Nekton Pilot*, passengers are immediately shown to their cabins. Decorated in a bright, whimsical ocean theme, the rooms feature carpeting, built-in closet/storage shelves, a vanity sink, individually controlled air-conditioning and piped music. Two twin beds may be converted to a single queen, with storage area underneath, and the private bathrooms have modern showers and

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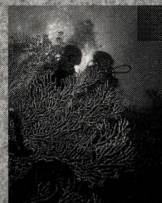
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In the main salon you'll find comfortable seating for watching videos from the ship's extensive collection or reading from the lending library. Throughout the week, the salon is also the gathering site for slide shows, reviews of guests' U/W videos or playing board games. There's also a large light table for viewing and supplies for mounting slides processed daily on board. Adjacent to the salon is the dining area, with tables seating four to six guests and a large serving bar for buffet meals. Once guests have served themselves, the crew members are in constant attendance to offer drinks, replenish plates with seconds and serve desserts. The crew members take pride in offering excellent service, making sure all of your needs are met. They always manage to do so in a relaxed, unobtrusive manner. Chef Wade Hughes has been with *Nekton Pilot* from the early building stages and is undoubtedly one of the operation's most valuable assets. His tantalizing creations range from gourmet to downhome southern dishes as well as the hot out of the oven cookies served each day.

Just outside the salon is the photo staging area, equipped with two large, carpeted photo tables and a barrel sized freshwater soak tank. Several of the *Nekton* crew members are available for photo services, including instruction, assistance with rental photo equipment and E-6 processing. Rentals include a supply of Nikonos setups, Aquashots, FunSavers and VHS video with housing. In addition, souvenir videos are available for purchase at the end of each week and photo supplies are available from the ship's store. Photographers also have the advantage of two large freshwater dip tanks on the dive platform and staff members who are well trained to handle cameras with care on your entries and exits.

At the dive deck, you'll find a sign-out board, so both you and the divemasters can keep track of your dive profile. Upon arrival at each new site, guests gather on the sundeck to receive an extensive briefing, which includes an illustrated diagram and a report on the conditions. The schedule is very flexible, with enough time allowed for at least two dives at each site. Divers may enter the water at their leisure. Most guests are able to make up to five dives per day (including the night dive). The staff is very accommodating, at times even opening the dive deck for sunrise

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dives. If you should need a guide or just feel more comfortable accompanied by a divemaster, the crew will be glad to provide that service.

I've found the staff of the *Nekton Pilot* to be one of the most professional I've encountered in live-aboard diving. All perform their jobs with enthusiastic and responsible attitudes.

Throughout the week your BC and regulator stay on the tank, which is filled right at your tank rack. A bin beneath provides storage for additional equipment and a freshwater shower is available for rinsing after the dive. Upstairs, on the sundeck, there's an area for hanging wetsuits and storage bins for personal items. After the dive you may stretch out on a lounge chair or relax at a table under the canopy. One of the many luxuries on the *Nekton Pilot* is the spa, a popular post-dive meeting place! For those with lots of energy, surface intervals also provide time for kayaking (the boat has four ocean kayaks) and snorkeling around the remote little cays.

We were fortunate during our week to have a guest lecturer on board—John Lopinot of the Palm Beach Post. Throughout the year, the guest list has included professional photographers such as John, marine biologists and even an archaeologist. The presentations and expert advice available from such distinguished guests really enhances the whole vacation experience.

TRAVEL

Entering The Bahamas requires a birth certificate with photo ID or a valid passport. If you're flying to George Town for the southern Bahamas itinerary, Nekton Diving Cruises offers a very cost effective rate on charter flights from Ft. Lauderdale. A 15 passenger van is available in that city for transfers from the international airport or to take you to your hotel if you're staying overnight following the excursion. The standard itinerary includes a Sunday departure and Saturday return but those arriving in George Town on Saturday have access to their cabins, with meals on their own until Sunday morning. George Town has several quaint inns and some interesting local restaurants with delicious, genuine island cooking.

The *Nekton* design has been so successful that plans are in the works to expand the operation to other dive destinations. In the meantime, the *Nekton Pilot* offers an excellent excursion of The Bahamas, with spacious accommodations, a smooth ride, excellent food and outstanding service. For more information or reservations, contact Nekton Diving Cruises, 520 SE 32nd Street, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316; (800) UW WORLD, (800) 899-6753 or (305) 463-9324 locally. You can also send a fax to (305) 463-8938. 🐠

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ADVANCED DIVING

(Continued from Page 20)

the future. To be valid, however, the grids need to be placed in the same location each time the survey is taken.

BASELINE: KNOTTED LINE. Nylon fishing line, size 21 or 24, works pretty well. It is thin enough to fit on a medium sized reel, abrasion resistant and not too stretchy. Very small diameter (numbers 30 to 36) braided nylon also works well. Remember to burn the ends so it doesn't ravel.

Mark every 10 feet with an overhand knot. When you do the knotting as you go, it takes two people to keep the line taut and ensure the knots are precisely 10 feet apart. If you get sloppy, the error introduced keeps compounding itself.

One way to guard against "knot creep" is to lay out a 100 foot line, then fold it into 10 equal lengths. Use a felt tipped marker to indicate where the knots will go, then go back and tie the knots. You may need several reels of line, depending upon the size of the survey area. This knotting must be done in advance of the dive. A baseline is a simple knotted line laid out straight and then anchored at each end. For duplication purposes, it is important to place the baseline anchors at places you can relocate, such as an unusual rock formation. Or, you may be able to pound a nail in the reef as a fixed end point. In sand, use a sand screw to anchor the line. The metal stakes used for dog leash anchors work great.

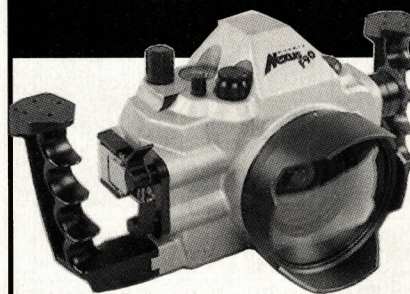
If you leave a nail or sand screw in place for multiple dives, be prepared to lose it. Sand may cover up the screw. Other divers see nails or pitons in a reef and take them. If you leave an anchor point, put a marker tag on it identifying it as part of a survey. There are no guarantees it will stay put.

TAPE MEASURE. The best choice is a common builder's 100 foot, fiberglass tape measure that comes in a crank up housing. You can buy this non-stretching, fiberglass tape for about \$30 at home improvement stores.

The housing that comes with the tape works pretty well underwater but can get jammed with sand. Most of the cases have a ring, so you can clip the reel on your BC or tie it off at an anchor point. No matter which tape measure you select, it needs to be long and on a reel.

MARKERS. Markers are attached to each anchor point on a baseline or survey line. Each marker is labeled as a coordinate. If you were encircling a wreck with ten point-to-point lines, they might be labeled W1 through W10. If you found separated rubble piles on the east side of the baseline, they might be labeled ER1 (for E [east], R [rubble], 1) and up. There is no way to know in advance what the labels

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will be. So, you need generic markers that can be labeled underwater as you go.

Small pieces of slate material with a drilled hole and short string loop work well. Some divers like to attach the markers to a wooden clothespin. This makes it easy to clip on a marker or remove with gloved hands. If you ever see countertop laminate color sample strips going in the trash, the 1.5 by 3 inch sample chips make great marker stock.

If you can't make markers in advance, a roll of gray duct tape will work. Duct tape can be pulled off a roll underwater and wrapped around a line; it will also stick to itself. A permanent, fine point marker will write underwater on duct tape. But, it is difficult to remove duct tape from a line after the dive. If you make acrylic markers in advance, you won't have to clean duct tape and adhesive residual off the line later!

Whatever type of marker you select, have a spare writing instrument in your BC pocket. Sport divers often use a grease pencil with their slate. When surveying you accumulate lots of data and will find the blunt tip of a grease pencil takes too much space. Most divers switch to a pencil for finer lines and less smudging. The same writing instrument should work on your slate and the marker tags.

ANCHOR POINTS. Surveys need straight segments of line. The math gets too complicated if a line segment curves. So, you need to anchor the end of each section to a fixed point. Sometimes you can wrap line around a rock, other times you will need to introduce a pivot point. This could be as small as a 60 penny spike nail. In the sand, the best choice may be a sand screw. On really hard rock, try using concrete nails.

Use common sense to decide what will do the least damage to the environment and meet your needs. If you are doing a one day survey and removing all anchors at the conclusion of the dive, they do not need to be permanent. If you damage a seafan with a rubbing line, it may have been better to drive a nail in the reef. Care should always be taken to preserve and protect the environment. A carpenter's claw hammer works well underwater and makes it easy to remove the nails with minimal damage. Buy a wooden handle hammer, drill a hole in it and attach a lanyard. Otherwise, you'll put the hammer down and lose it. Some divers prefer a four to six pound sledge hammer for quicker anchor point fixing.

COMPASS. Accuracy of compass readings is critical in taking a survey. Even a one degree error means that when your data is transferred to a map it will not form a closed loop.

Select a compass that has easy to read degree marks. If your compass only has every five degrees marked, it will be

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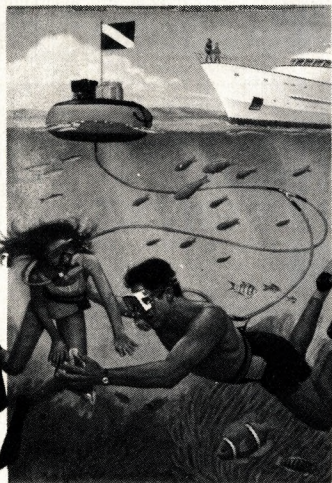
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ADVANCED DIVING

highly inaccurate for surveying. Look for a well damped compass card that allows the arrow to swing slowly and smoothly.

Since the compass is going to be mounted on your slate, consider buying a backpacking compass. They are flatter, come with a backplate and are easy to use. They are usually liquid filled for smooth movement and have two degree increments for better accuracy.

SURVEY SLATE AND PENCIL. A survey slate is your instrument dashboard. Mounted on a regular slate are the instruments you need to have in constant view. At a minimum, this is a compass and pencil. Depending upon the nature of the survey, it could also include a depth gauge, bubble level and brass clip.

Assembly instructions are simple. When mounting anything to the slate, use brass or stainless steel screws or glue. Anything else may be magnetic and influence the compass readings. Adhesive mounting is the last choice, since a sharp blow may pop a glued item off the slate. Place each item you will be mounting next to the compass to be sure they are not magnetic. If the compass needle moves at all, that item is affecting the compass and you need to select another model gauge or other type of screw or nut.

Instruments should be arranged for easy reading, i.e., on the left side of the slate for right handers and on the right side of the slate for left handers. It is hard to write when you are working over a depth gauge.

Be sure the compass lubber line is precisely parallel to the edge of the slate. You will be holding the slate next to the survey line when taking readings. The edge of the slate becomes an extension of your compass, which yields much more accurate readings. If the compass is cocked, all the readings will be off-kilter.

RV supply stores sell small, cheap bubble levels. Mount the level so you can see it at the same time as the compass. Take the compass readings from a level survey slate for added accuracy.

Slate size is a matter of personal preference and ease of use. A 5 by 7 inch slate may fit in a BC. Larger slates have longer straight edges and aid accuracy. Smaller slates are easier to stow. Don't get one that's too small or you won't have enough room to write survey notes. Either size should have a brass clip so you never set the slate down. Whichever size you choose should also have a holder, so the pencil is not left to dangle.

While researching this article I found a new type of continuous lead pencil. Manufactured by Mead, the Redi-Pencil is inexpensive and available at office supply stores. If your local stationery store

doesn't carry Redi-Pencils, call Dive Rite Manufacturing at (904) 752-1087 and ask for item number 2005—it costs about \$1.

These pencils have pre-sharpened lengths of lead inside a hollow plastic shaft. If the lead point breaks, pull it out, open the pencil's other end and drop in the no-point piece of lead. That pushes a new sharp piece of lead to the pencil's writing end. You may need to put a nylon tie-wrap nub on the pencil to be sure it will stay on your slate's pencil clip.

Pencil holders can be tricky. They need to be tight enough to hold the pencil but not so tight gloved hands can't extract it. A standard nylon tie-wrap may work. (Drill a hole in the slate and poke the tie through, forming a loop, leaving the locking nub on the slate's backside.) A length of surgical rubber tubing pushed over the eraser end of a standard pencil might suit you. Or, you can get creative at the hardware store and find a plastic clip that exactly fits your pencil preference.

RECONNAISSANCE DIVE

Before you do the first survey, make a reconnaissance dive. Make simple pencil sketch notes about the configuration of the terrain. Armed with this information, you can decide where to lay baselines for the survey. Look for rocks or other natural structures that will make it easy to relocate anchor points.

You may want to start using the symbols that will be on your completed map. Identify major topographical features that

COMMON MAP SYMBOLS

- Artifact area
- Boulder
- Direction of frequent current
- Edge of kelp
- Edge of reef structure
- Gravel
- Ledge
- Rocks
- Sand
- Silt
- Slope
- Surge zone
- Survey marker

can be used as reference points. See our sidebar for a list of common symbols.

SUMMARY

Surveying and mapping dives require more preparation but you will be rewarded with a sense of accomplishment and a permanent record of places you want to relocate.

Once the novelty of breathing underwater wears off, most people use activities such as underwater photography to

add a purpose to their diving. Surveying and mapping will give you the skills to demonstrate your knowledge of all the local hot spots. For a collector, mapping allows documentation of where you have searched and where you made finds. Northwest bottle collectors have unexpectedly found a treasure pile and, by mapping their next finds, been able to see the outline of a dock that formerly existed at the site.

In next month's column we will cover laying baselines, taking readings, making location notes, stick drawings and how to check your readings and convert the data to a map. You've got a month to prepare your markers and survey slate for the big dive!

FOR MORE INFORMATION. If your mapping needs call for more precision, an excellent reference book is *Basic Underwater Cave Surveying* by John Burge. It is available for \$15 from The Cave Diving Section of the National Speleological Society, Inc., P.O. Box 950, Branford, FL 32008-0950. Order item number 40500.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT. While surfing the net I put out a request for column ideas and lots of cyberspace divers answered. Thanks to Jim Strohm, PADI OWSI 51985, who suggested surveying and mapping articles. Special thanks to Jeff Bozanic, NAUI 5334, NSS 181, for his research assistance. His experience as a scientific surveyor and mapper was invaluable.

FANTASY ISLAND

(Continued from Page 61)

eastern tip of the island extending offshore, the dive gazebo (tanks are dropped off and picked up on request). On the way to the dive shop from the main building is a well stocked snack and gift shop. Two lighted tennis courts are nestled on the main island shore. Just west of the dive shop is a full service marina. The resort, a leisure class beach hotel, a dedicated dive resort and a complete marina, can be seen in a single view only from an aerial perch. The scene is an emerald and cream islet dropped into a turquoise sea. Also easily seen from the air is the continuous fringe of golden reefs just offshore. New additions include a guestwing under construction, a new picnic area and a covered walk from the main building past the gift shop. There are more than 80 fulltime employees, almost entirely locals, to serve guests.

Just east of the resort, an easy swim from the shore dive gazebo, is **Tattoo's Wreck**, the remains of a DC-3 aircraft, and the **Prince Albert**, an intact island freighter sitting upright on a sand bottom. The shipwreck is 120 feet long and rests in 60 feet of water.

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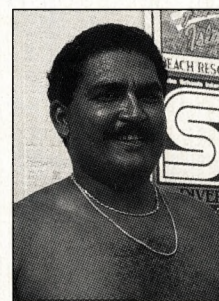
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FANTASY ISLAND

divers, usually a maximum of 16 guests per boat, to the miles of fringing reefs along the north and south coasts. Normally, three single tank boat trips per day and two single tank night dives per week are offered. Day trips leave the dock at 9:00, 11:00 and 2:30. Masks, fins and snorkels are complimentary for guests; 24 complete sets of scuba gear are available as rentals. Open water scuba instruction is available. The dive operation is normally open from 6:30 am to 10:00 pm daily, tended by 10 fulltime employees.

South coast dive sites include the awesome **Calvin's Crack**, a huge crevice through the top of the reef nearly 250 feet long and averaging 12 feet wide. The opening begins in 35 feet of water and descends



Hank Hynds is the manager of Fantasy Island Resort's superb dive operations.

to 90. A second crevice joins it from the side and eventually dead ends. Lots of huge sponges protrude from the wall, which is segregated into clumps of coral by sandchutes. This is a good site for schools of squid and several moray eels. **Fantasy Wall**, a new site discovered and developed by Hank Hynds, is a big sandy chute beginning in 30 feet of water. Here is another huge crevice and swim-through from 40 to 70 feet deep. Large barrel sponges, deep water fans and wire corals decorate the drop-off. A big pinnacle, 90 feet deep, is covered with sponges and Roatan's distinctive yellow gorgonians. Schools of jacks and Spadefish are nearly always present. **Missing Link** is an example of one of the island's most fascinating shallow dive sites. Here is a coral garden in only 20 feet of water. A series of sandy chutes attracts schools of Bermuda Chubs, snappers, Spadefish and Blue Chromis. This site connects to **40 Foot Point**, one of the quality drop-off sites only minutes from the resort.

North coast sites available to Fantasy Island are comparatively remote and seldom dived by any other operation. There are many inside walls leading to the outer reef and reef slopes capped by acres of Elkhorn Coral. An example of a special north coast site is **Wall Street**, a sand and coral rubble bottom sided by vertical walls of coral. This natural thoroughfare begins very shallow and runs for nearly 100 yards to the other wall. **Twin Cindy's Fantasy** is a big crevice more than 30 feet wide,

(Continued on Page 128)

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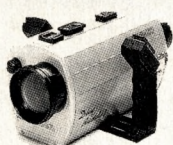
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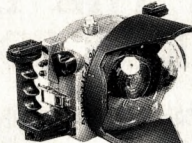
Sea & Sea
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Nikon N90s



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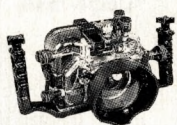
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FANTASY ISLAND

(Continued from Page 120)

which begins in 20 feet of water. Running for 350 feet, it exits at 80 to 100 feet. The sides of the crevice have many overhangs sprouting groves of sponges. Several large coral pinnacles rise from the channel. This is a gradual drop-off where many pelagics abound. **Tiano's Reef** features huge coral heads and many crevices, chimneys and canyon. This mid depth dive beginning 20 feet deep and continuing to 50 to 60 feet often harbors Nurse Sharks, Eagle Rays and turtles.

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BRAC REEF BEACH

(Continued from Page 75)

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Operating every weekday, morning dives leave promptly at 8:30 for the two tank trips—customarily a wall dive, followed by a shallow site. The afternoon dive, a single shallow dive in the 15 to 50 foot range, normally departs at 2:30 pm. Night dives are usually scheduled the same day as the Little Cayman/Bloody Bay Wall outing, leaving the dock at 7:30, after dinner.

Recent legislation, focused on continued protection of the Cayman Islands' natural resources, has limited each dive operator to a maximum of 14 dive trips per week to **Bloody Bay Wall** and **Jackson Bight**, off Little Cayman. Reef Divers visits Little Cayman a couple times per week.

This, of course, does not mean you should rule out Cayman Brac; it is a neat little island, with an underwater realm that warrants serious consideration. Because of its stringbean shape, most of the dive sites are off the north and south shores.

While most of Cayman Brac's walls begin their plunge around 55 feet, there are a couple, such as **Cemetery Wall**, which start around the 45 foot mark. Decorated profusely with colorful tube and rope sponges and deep water gorgonians, this wall is an exquisite example of Cayman Brac diving. Along the same stretch are more dramatic drop-offs such as **Strawberry Sponge Wall**, which starts at 45 feet and plunges into the abyss. Even on a windy day, underwater visibility is seldom, if ever, less than 100 feet; 120 to 150 feet is the norm.

Many of the walls along the south side feature highly serrated profiles with cascading descents. Some of the favorites along this side include **Rock Monster Chimney**, **Wilderness Wall** and **Bluff Wall**. Almost all are cut through with tunnels, winding crevices and narrow chasms ready to spit intrepid visitors into the blue void on the other side. Wilderness Wall is somewhat different because of its huge, 55 foot high by 40 foot wide coral pinnacle, standing out from the upper rim of the coral precipice. In addition to the broad fans of deep water gorgonians and tangled tresses of Red and Lavender Rope Sponges, there is a large school of Horse-eye Jacks that seems to fancy the pinnacle. There are even a few surprises, such as **Anchor Wall**, a site containing a large iron anchor mysteri-

ously wedged in one of its crevices.

On the north side, the most prominent characteristic of shallow reef sites such as **Greenhouse**, **Bert Brothers Boulders** and **Snapper Reef**, to name a few, are the massive 10 to 20 foot high Boulder Star Coral formations scattered across the bottom like large haystacks. Most of the site names are based on familiar landmarks, such as an individual's home or the town cemetery. Greenhouse, for example, is named after the green colored house on the shore and not for its exquisite coral formations, which have a greenish-brown color. Other landmark named reefs include **School House Reef**, straight out from a school house near the shore, and **Buccaneer Reef**, off the defunct Buccaneer Inn Hotel. If you can't guess where the **End of Island Wall** is, you're not making much of a sporting effort!

What is even more intriguing about Cayman Brac is that not all of its diving falls into the well known and routine. Its eastern tip still holds virgin sites. Although the diving here is generally ruled by weather and frequently effected by mild currents and easterly trade winds, it is certainly not out of reach to those who wish to do a little exploring. In fact, if you're up for the challenge, Reef Divers will be happy to help you.

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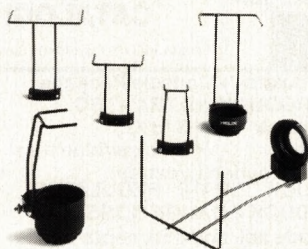
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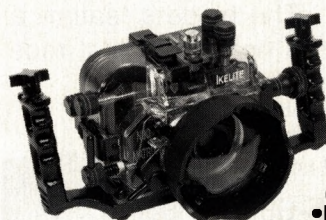


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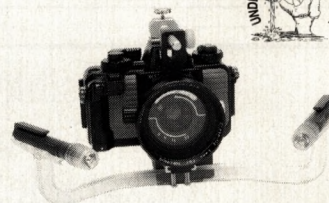
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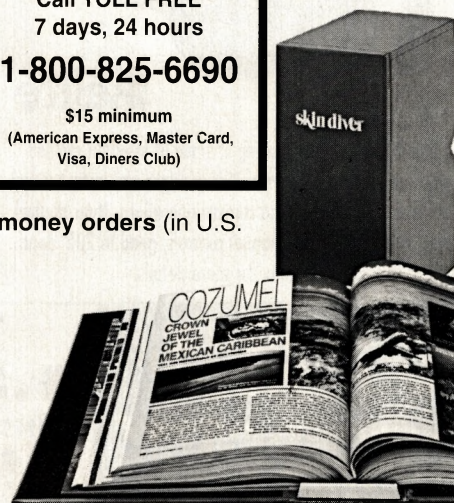
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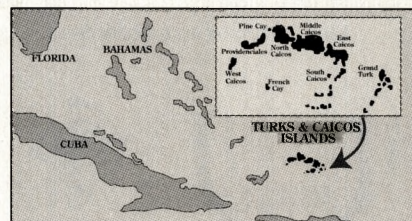


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(Continued from Page 41)

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Questions from the Internet

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.

It's no surprise there is a place to discuss diving medicine on the Internet. There are several user groups that address diving and one in particular that deals with diving medicine—HYPERBAR. Since the questions discussed are of general interest, I will address some of them in this column.

ENERGY METABOLISM DURING DIVING

An interesting question was raised about the utilization of carbohydrates and fats during exercise and diving. In well trained endurance athletes, the body learns to utilize fat at lower work rates and earlier after exercise begins. This spares the carbohydrate stores, which are not as extensive as the fat stores, and avoids depletion of carbohydrates during



photo/Bonnie J. Cardone

While divers will rarely "hit the wall" associated with endurance sports, good physical conditioning provides a safety advantage when fighting strong currents, swimming a great distance or during a rescue situation.

prolonged exercise. When carbohydrates are depleted, blood glucose levels fall and deprive the brain of its energy source (this is called hypoglycemia). When this happens, the brain does not function normally and an individual could become disoriented or even black out. This is one of the concerns in diving with diabetes because insulin can cause a reduction of blood glucose and the diver may lose consciousness. The question raised was whether endurance training in

divers would allow enough glucose sparing that divers could perform for prolonged periods underwater without being concerned about energy depletion.

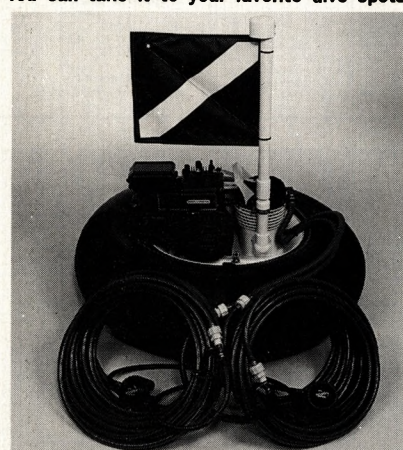
The type of fuel utilized during exercise depends on the intensity and duration. Short bursts of exercise consume mostly carbohydrates. When exercise is prolonged (more than an hour), the body begins to use fats for fuel. During prolonged exercise, fats account for about 60 percent of the energy needs and carbohydrates

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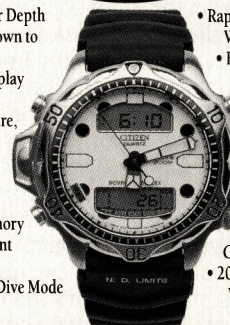
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about 40 percent. In well trained athletes, this proportion may be slightly higher for fats (65 to 70 percent) and the switch from higher carbohydrate proportions may occur earlier. In all cases, there is a point when the carbohydrate stores become depleted. This may be at three or four hours but, when it happens, muscles stiffen and stop working. This is called "hitting the wall" among long distance runners and I am sure some of you have experienced this feeling. It is common among marathoners and long distance cyclists.

There are several reasons why this concept would be difficult to apply to divers. First, the need to preserve carbohydrate fuel stores usually only becomes important at high levels of exercise. Levels of intensity above 50 percent of an individual's capacity (measured by maximum oxygen uptake) are required over a four to five hour period. At work levels below this intensity, fat and carbohydrate metabolic fuel consumption is adequate for 8 to 10 hours of continuous work. Generally, divers are not required to work at intensities above 50 percent of maximum capacity. This level of work is associated with early fatigue, reduced endurance, high breathing rates and consumption of large amounts of breathing gas. Divers could not be placed in a work situation that required this level of exercise over a three to four hour dive for safety reasons.

More efficient use of fat for fuel will not produce a measurable benefit for divers who wish to prolong their U/W time. On the other hand, physical conditioning does provide a significant safety advantage when there is a need for a brief burst of high energy to avoid an accident or assist in an emergency. This might be needed when rescuing another diver, when a long swim is needed to get to the boat or shore or when surface conditions make swimming difficult. The poorly conditioned diver might fail in these situations, while the conditioned diver will succeed.

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Recently there was a discussion about methods for detecting a patent foramen ovale (PFO). Concern was expressed over the use of bubbles injected into the heart during echo examination.

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Advances in echo technology have added the ability to visualize blood flowing through the heart by measuring the Doppler shift of sound reflected from the red blood cells. Doppler information is coded to display blood velocity as a color spectrum. One can then observe the heart image with small flames or streaks of color. These images move as the blood velocity changes with the heart beat. Abnormal blood flow is easily detected with this method. Echo provides a non-invasive view of the heart muscle, valves and major blood vessels; Doppler provides data on normal and abnormal blood flow.

Using echo and Doppler together provides information about the foramen ovale. When there is a leak, one can see a small flame of blood flow through the PFO. Echo is also an excellent means for detecting bubbles in the blood because sound reflects well from the air-liquid boundary. To test for leaks inside the heart, physicians inject saline containing many small bubbles (microbubbles) into a vein and watch the bubbles flow through the heart on the echo image. If bubbles flow through a PFO they can be seen easily.

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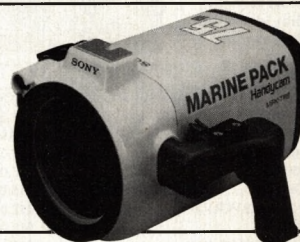
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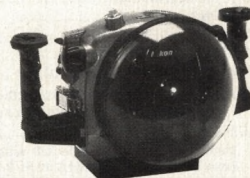
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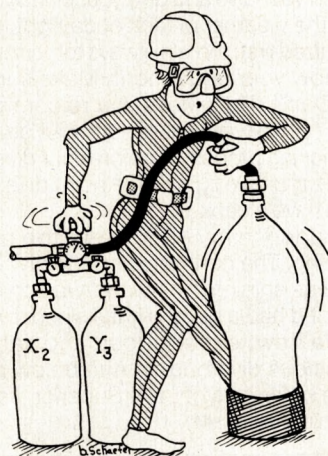
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ARE OLD INJURIES PRONE TO BENDS?

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BY TERRY COX-JOSEPH

We started out in late afternoon, when the sun was bright and the waters of Two Harbors, Lake Superior, were glittering. But our group of five was unorganized. We talked, laughed and made unnecessary, time consuming trips back and forth to the gear shop, car, tents and lake.

We were diving a shipwreck. I'd dived a wreck off Nags Head, North Carolina and, disappointed with the poor visibility and nauseating current, was anxious to try another wreck in clear, fresh, deep water.

By the time we hit the water, the sun had set. Despite all our visits to the dive shop, two of us had problems with our weights. I didn't have enough and repeatedly surfaced. Marnie's weights were too heavy. We women had never been on an unsupervised dive before and, although several of our group were very experienced divers, we somehow ended up as dive buddies. Marnie didn't feel ready. Wisely, she decided to sit out the dive. I transferred the weights from her hips to mine in the dark, in the water, as waves smashed us against the rocks. When I'd finished, my forearms were so fatigued they trembled.

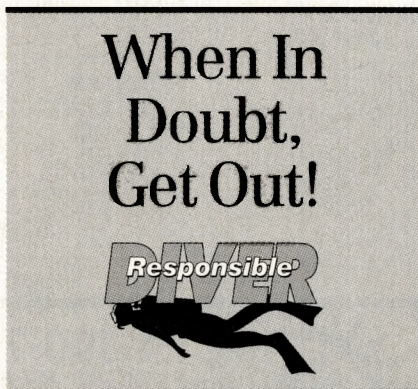
Abandoning Marnie to find her own way ashore, I paddled into the darkness, determined to dive. On reaching the site where the others were descending I was quite out of breath so I rested for a moment. I needed to recover from the rock battering I'd received and the subsequent swim out.

I tried, once again, to descend with the others but, even with all the extra weight, I was still overly buoyant. Someone called out, asking if I was going to follow. "I can't get down," I shouted back. "Go ahead. I'll catch up." I watched the underwater lights penetrate the inky blackness. Then, the lights faded.

It finally dawned on me I'd neglected to bring a dive light. The weather was deteriorating quickly. My rented facemask fit poorly and, with a crushing wave, rode down over my mouth knocking out my

regulator and dug into my throat. The waves rocked me like so much flotsam and were wearing me out. I was blind in the dark. My predicament was worsening.

After replacing my mask and regulator, I noticed everyone else was on shore. I could see their bodies silhouetted against flashlights. How had they known to surface, how had they made it safely to shore so quickly? I must have been struggling in the water much longer than I thought. Suddenly, another violent wave crashed



over me, again wrenching my regulator out of my mouth. My mask covered my mouth like the hand of a kidnapper.

I recalled an illustration in my dive book indicating proper float position: waterline at eye level. This waterline was at nose level—never mind the waves. I hit my BC. Nothing.

As I took a breath to inflate my BC manually, a wave exploded into my lungs. A coughing spasm stole my last ounce of energy. Neck arched backward in an attempt to inhale above the waves, I retrieved my dangling regulator. One breath. Try the BC—I just couldn't manage it in the rough surf.

Tossing aside my regulator, I began to swim to shore in a flailing panic. I paddled for several minutes. The lights on shore were getting dimmer, the silhouettes smaller. The waves were inexplicably pushing me back. "Help!" I yelled.

"Help!" I screamed.

I ran a mental checklist. Stay calm. Breathe. Check the BC. Inflate manually. Drop your weights. Swim to shore. Failure on all counts.

Reason sank beneath the waves. Most obviously, I could have used the CO₂ cartridge—but I didn't even know I had one. Shame on me.

With what I was certain was my last breath of air, I threw back my head and screamed again. "If I can do that," I thought, "why can't I inflate the vest?" I'd completely forgotten about my regulator. I saw newspaper headlines: "Twin Cities Woman Drowns in Lake Superior." "Shipwreck Claims Another Life."

Then I heard a voice in the blackness, inches from my ear. It was Tim, the most experienced of our group. "Don't do anything," he said as he pulled me in. "Just let me do the work." I relaxed as he pulled me through the torrid surf to safety.

Safely on shore, I contemplated the catalogue of mistakes I'd made that nearly cost me my life.

I will always use the buddy system. It's better to take away just one buddy's dive time than the entire group's. Also, never exceed your skill level—two unprepared, inexperienced divers on a night dive in rough conditions (or any dive, for that matter) are a recipe for disaster.

Plan your dive and dive your plan. Don't fight the weather or lack of daylight. Get organized first; there's always tomorrow.

Know your equipment. Make sure it fits. Don't dive unless you're comfortable. And, always make sure your gear is functioning properly—before your dive!

Use multiple lights on a night dive; always have a back-up.

I traded in my equipment the next morning. The new gear fit perfectly. The sun was shining. The water was crystal clear. I'd had a good night's sleep. I was with a new, experienced and safety conscious dive buddy. And below me, in the icy waters of Lake Superior, I saw my shipwreck. 

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